

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2573

As of February 25, 2014

Title: An act relating to a sunrise review of regulation of wrestling events.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of licensing to conduct a review of the need for regulation of theatrical wrestling events.

Sponsors: Representative Hudgins.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/17/14, 82-14.

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 2/24/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Staff: Jessica Stevenson (786-7465)

Background: The Department of Licensing (DOL) regulates boxing, martial arts, kickboxing, and wrestling events. Wrestling shows are currently defined as sports entertainment in which participants display skill and physically struggle against each other in the ring, and may include the participants not trying to win, a predetermined outcome, or both.

At the request of the Legislature, DOL conducts sunrise reviews to develop recommendations for the Legislature for business profession credentialing proposals. The factors considered for determining state regulation of a business profession include whether the:

- unregulated practice can clearly harm or endanger the health, safety, or welfare of the public;
- public needs and can reasonably be expected to benefit from an assurance of initial and continuing professional ability; and
- public cannot be effectively protected by other means in a more cost-beneficial manner.

Summary of Bill: DOL must conduct a sunrise review of the need to regulate theatrical wrestling events using the criteria for determining state regulation of a business profession to develop recommendations for the Legislature. In creating its recommendations, DOL must:

1. examine regulation of theatrical wrestling in other states;
2. consult with professional wrestling or theatrical wrestling participants, stakeholders, and boxing, martial arts, and wrestling licensees; and

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3. consider the amount of regulation required for:
 - a. organizations infrequently sponsoring these events; and
 - b. wrestling events that do not involve competition.

By November 1, 2014, DOL must submit to the Legislature its recommendations on the need to regulate theatrical wrestling and the minimum qualifications and oversight required.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The purpose of the sunrise review is to determine how much, if any, regulation should be put on theatrical wrestling. The difference between boxing and theatrical wrestling is that the participants in theatrical wrestling are trying to work together in the show, rather than trying to hurt each other. The wrestling is more of a theatrical performance than fighting. Beyond entertainment value, there is a serious issue of protecting participants and state interests. Participants want opponents to have the proper training so they can work together without getting hurt. The high costs have made it difficult to plan events, and some events have been cancelled. Washington has one of the least active pro wrestling scenes in the nation. DOL requirements for wrestling shows are overreaching and too expensive for small promoters. Wrestling should not be regulated by DOL, and it should be unregulated. Current laws are a hindrance to small promoter businesses and to the state's ability to produce revenue.

OTHER: Current regulation of wrestling requires \$10,000 bond, but does not require medical insurance for the participants. A study for theatrical wrestling is reasonable because it is not at the same level as martial arts or boxing. Promoters were asked to find some avenue for separating ticket sales for their event and the main event.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Hudgins, prime sponsor; Jake Stratton, Josh Kuntz, Michael Leveton, citizens.

OTHER: Toni Sermonti, Susan Colard, DOL.