

MAY 25, 2005

SCHAKOWSKY STRENGTHENS BOXING, STEROIDS BILL TO MAKE SPORTS SAFER

WASHINGTON, DC -- In a subcommittee markup today, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) strengthened two bills that would protect athletes and clean up sports. As the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, Representative Schakowsky spoke in support of H.R. 1065, the U.S. Boxing Commission Act, which would establish a federal boxing commission to protect the health and safety of boxers. Representative Schakowsky also introduced a manager's amendment to H.R. 1862, the Drug Free Sports Act, to increase the number of required drug tests for athletes while ensuring that drug standards are tailored to each sport and that penalties are harshest for those who knowingly used prohibited performance enhancing drugs without medical necessity.

Representative Schakowsky's complete remarks are below, as delivered in committee:

H.R. 1065, the U.S. Boxing Commission Act

"After our hearings on boxing, it was quite clear that the current federal boxing regulations, which are meant to protect boxer's health and financial interests, were not being enforced. Not every manager is like Clint Eastwood in "Million Dollar Baby" and looking out for the best interest of their boxers. And, because of the serious blows that could be dealt to boxers by the lack of enforcement of these minimum standards, we both agreed that it was time to do something about that with the U.S. Boxing Commission Act.

Boxing is a tough sport. If health and safety standards are not being met, if the medical professionals who monitor boxers' fitness cannot recognize health dangers to them, the boxers' very lives are at stake. Approximately 50 boxers have died in the ring over the last 35 years. Additionally, because so many parties have financial stakes in each match, and their interests may run counter to the boxer's, many boxers end up destitute.

Many argue that the federal health and safety standards are not followed because no corresponding government regulatory body exists. The absence of a national

commission makes boxing unlike all other major professional sports and the absence of any serious movement in the sport to protect its athletes has compelled us to draft H.R. 1065 to establish the U.S. Boxing Commission and ensure that standards are uniform and boxers are protected."

H.R. 1862, the Drug Free Sports Act

"Our hearings on performance-enhancing drugs also made it quite clear that professional sports leagues have very different policies on the use of performance-enhancing drugs. Some leagues have strong policies from which we can learn, like the National Football League and how it sets penalties as a percentage of the season. Others have lenient policies that seem to be a de facto condoning of steroid abuse."

In order to clean up sports, level the playing field, and send a clear message to our young athletes - the junior high, high school, and college students - that performance enhancing drugs should not be an option, H.R. 1862, the Drug Free Sports Act sets a minimum standard to which the leagues should adhere."

I am truly glad that we were able to work out many of the drafting and policy issues that we had with the bill as introduced. I think the manager's amendment, which I will discuss later in further detail, establishes a solid base from which we can work as we go to full committee markup."

This is an important piece of legislation because taking a strong stand against the use of performance enhancing drugs in professional sports will benefit our junior high, high school, and college athletes who may turn to harmful drugs to stay competitive. As we all know, young athletes are seeing professional athletes making millions of dollars from being "juiced up" and they themselves want to meet physical-performance standards that would be impossible without artificial augmentation. Again, according to a survey by the University of Michigan, steroid use by high school seniors increased 54 percent between 2003 and 1996. Passing this legislation could help us turn that number around and help us protect our young athletes from the serious health effects of using drugs like steroids."

Student athletes put themselves at great risk by using steroids. Steroids stunt growth and increase the likelihood of ligament and tendon injury - not to mention heart attacks, liver failure, and other permanent and irreversible problems. Our young athletes are doing this because they know that when "Play Ball" is called out, the field today is not level and they want to be in the game. I believe that if professional athletes follow standards that promote safe and healthy sportsmanship, we will be more likely to see the same on the junior high, high school, and collegiate levels.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on these bills in a strong bipartisan fashion, like we did with the spyware bill which passed on the House floor this week, 393-4. Thank you."