

**CALIFORNIA STATE  
ATHLETIC COMMISSION**

**2019-2023**



**Strategic  
Plan**

Adopted: December 11, 2018

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# California State Athletic Commissioners

John Carvelli, Chair

Mary Lehman, Vice Chair

Martha Shen-Urquidez, Commissioner

Vernon Williams, Ph.D., Commissioner

Van Gordon Sauter, Commissioner

Luis Ayala, Commissioner

EDMUND G. BROWN, JR., GOVERNOR

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DEAN R. GRAFILO, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

ANDY FOSTER, EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ATHLETIC COMMISSION

## About the California State Athletic Commission

The California State Athletic Commission (Commission) is responsible for protecting the health and safety of its licensees: boxers, kickboxers, and other martial arts athletes. Concerned with athlete injuries and death, the public established the Commission by initiative in 1924. The Commission is responsible for implementation and enforcement of the Federal Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act (Federal Boxing Act) and the California Boxing Act or State Athletic Commission Act (State Act). The Commission has four main functions: licensing, enforcement, regulating events and administering the Professional Boxers' Pension Fund (Pension Plan).

Specifically, the Commission establishes requirements for licensure, issues and renews licenses, approves and regulates events, assigns ringside officials, investigates complaints received, and enforces applicable laws by issuing fines and suspending or revoking licenses.

The Commission is one of 38 boards, bureaus, committees, and other programs at the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA).

The Commission is comprised of seven members. Five members are appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Senate Committee on Rules. One member is appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules and one member is appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly. Commissioners are part-time employees who receive a \$100-a-day per diem. While there are no qualifications for an individual appointed to the Commission, no person currently licensed as a promoter, manager or judge may serve on the Commission. The law also specifies that efforts should be made to ensure at least four members have experience in either medicine as a licensed physician or surgeon specializing in neurology, neurosurgery, head trauma or sports medicine, financial management, public safety, and the sports regulated by the Commission.

The Commission Executive Officer (EO) is appointed by the Commission, subject to approval by the Director of DCA. The current EO has served since November 2012.

## How Does the Commission Accomplish its Mission?

The Commission provides direction, management, and control for professional and amateur boxing, professional and amateur kickboxing, and all forms and combinations of full contact martial arts contests, including mixed martial arts (MMA) and matches or exhibitions conducted, held or given in California.

The Commission meets about six times per year to:

- Handle matters related to licensure and appeals of license denials, suspensions and fines.
- Propose and review regulations or legislation focused on maintaining the health and safety of fighters.
- Consider issues related to the Boxer's Pension Program and the Neurological Examination Account.
- Evaluate funding and revenue strategies.
- Address a variety of topics brought forth by stakeholders.

# 2015-2018 Strategic Plan Accomplishments

The Commission accomplished the following goals since the adoption of the previous 2015-2018 strategic plan.

1. In 2015, the California State Athletic Commission officially established the practice of dehydration and weight cutting as one of the largest industry wide health concerns. A summit was held in California on June 7, 2018, and the most pertinent issues were addressed first. Nearly 3 years later, after policies and regulations were implemented in the sport of mixed martial arts, the commission is expanding its efforts and successful protocol into the sport of boxing.
2. Legislation was chaptered that allows the Commission to fund special neurological examinations and explore new diagnostic imaging and testing to be used in relation to the examinations required by this section. The Commission obtained a contract with C3 Logix to provide the necessary tools to conduct neurological testing of athletes. This testing determines the relationship between the biomechanics of impact forces to the brain and their behavioral and physiological sequences to advance diagnostics, athlete care, return to play standards, understanding of the acute and long-term effects on brain health, and effective rehabilitation techniques to allow a safer environment for competition. The results of these tests are used to assist the Commission in making policy decisions regarding the health and safety of the athletes. The neurological testing is given before and after competition. This is a mission critical function that promotes the health, safety and welfare of participants in regulated combat sporting events.
3. The Commission promulgated the following regulations:
  - **Pension** – Sections 401 – 406. The Commission identified three main problems with the administration of certain pension program regulations. First, the Plan regulations related to Lost Beneficiary / Forfeitures, section 405 (d), were not followed by the third-party administrator. The third-party administrator stated the 405 (d) regulation language was not followed because its intent was not clear. Secondly, the Commission identified some of the problems created by the third-party administrator not following 405 (d). Finally, the commission identified a funding source deficiency in the original language related to the Lost Beneficiary/ Forfeiture provisions. The changes in this regulation package addressed these problems.
  - **Definitions, Prohibited Substances and Methods, Therapeutic Use Exemptions, Transgender Athletes** – Sections 201.5, 303, 424-426 and 830-837. This regulation change mainly addressed the issues of prohibited substances and Transgender athletes. The Commission amended its regulations to adopt very strict bans on prohibited substances and methods; adopt a new regulation identifying the circumstances under which an athlete,

when medically necessary, may receive approval to use a prohibited substance or method; adopt a regulation setting out the rules governing Transgender athletes who apply to compete in Commission-regulated events. This rulemaking also made a technical clean-up amendment to one of its definitions, necessitated by the proposed adoption of “Transgender Athletes” regulations.

- **Headgear** – Section 610. This regulation change required the use of headgear in amateur contests for the protection of amateur boxers.
- **Dehydration & Rehydration** – Sections 297, 299 and 300. This regulation change was necessary to have an immediate effect in providing a safer weigh-in procedure as well as testing of athletes for severe dehydration prior to a bout. It helps prevent athletes from using severe dehydration as a method to make the contracted bout weight. The regulation change allows the CSAC appointed ringside physicians to test athletes for dehydration and to remove a contestant from a fight if the athlete is deemed to be severely dehydrated. Also, the regulation change prohibits the use of intravenous therapies to regain hydration after a weigh-in.
- **Payment of Contestants** – Section 232. This regulation change mainly addressed that Athletes are not provided a minimum purse for fighting. This has allowed some promoters to exploit athletes by paying them \$1.00 instead of an industry minimum. This regulation set a minimum purse amount of one hundred dollars (\$100) per round.

## **Mission**

The California State Athletic Commission is dedicated to the health, safety and welfare of participants in regulated combat sporting events, through ethical and professional service.

## **Vision**

California is the premier model for the safety and fairness of regulated combat sporting events.



## Strategic Goals

### **1 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Commission fosters a safe and healthy environment for participants in regulated combat sporting events.

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### **2 LICENCING**

The Commission is an international leader in promoting licensing standards for participants in regulated combat sporting events.

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### **3 ENFORCEMENT**

The Commission protects consumers by preventing violations and effectively enforcing laws and regulations when violations occur.

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### **4 LEGISLATION, REGULATION AND POLICY**

The Commission pursues statutes, regulations, policies and procedures that strengthen and support their mandate and mission.

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### **5 ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

The Commission builds an excellent organization through proper governance, effective leadership and responsible management.

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### **6 PENSION PLAN**

The Commission effectively manages the California Professional Boxers Pension Fund.

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### **7 OUTREACH**

The Commission proactively communicates its mission, vision and goals to stakeholders.

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# Goal 1: Health and Safety

*The Commission fosters a safe and healthy environment for participants in regulated combat sporting events.*

- 1.1 Educate licensees with regards to the health and safety rules (e.g. weight cutting, hydration, using performance enhancing drugs) to keep licensees safe.
- 1.2 Enhance drug testing practices to reduce doping violations and protect licensees.
- 1.3 Research and analyze the data on concussion management protocol to further enhance and improve health and safety of fighters and contribute to global awareness.
- 1.4 Educate fight matchmakers on making the right matches in the appropriate weight class to strengthen matchmaking skills.
- 1.5 Increase resources needed to adequately address health and safety concerns.
- 1.6 Advocate for more uniform testing globally to protect athletes.
- 1.7 Reach out to Native American tribes and international stakeholders to strengthen relationships and be invited to assist with regulatory enhancements to the health and safety of fighters worldwide.

## **Goal 2: Licensing**

*The Commission is an international leader in promoting licensing standards for participants in regulated combat sporting events.*

2.1 Acquire a licensing database with online capabilities to be more efficient and save resources.

## **Goal 3: Enforcement**

*The Commission protects consumers by preventing violations and effectively enforcing laws and regulations when violations occur.*

- 3.1 Increase resources to identify unlicensed activity to the protect the public.
- 3.2 Develop training and evaluations for inspectors, referees, and judges to improve fights and preserve a sense of fairness.
- 3.3 Expand California State Athletic Commission’s online presence to promote and educate about the Commission worldwide.

## **Goal 4: Legislation, Regulation and Policy**

*The Commission pursues statutes, regulations, policies and procedures that strengthen and support their mandate and mission.*

- 4.1 Identify needed legislation or regulation to anticipate challenges and increase revenues and efficiency.
- 4.2 Improve communication with DCA to keep abreast on the status of regulations.
- 4.3 Recommend proposed legislation that seeks necessary fee increases to keep up with costs and increase resources.
- 4.4 Streamline the process of approving regulations to allow for quicker implementation of regulations.

## **Goal 5: Organizational Effectiveness**

*The Commission builds an excellent organization through proper governance, effective leadership and responsible management.*

- 1.1 Create a succession plan to keep institutional knowledge and functionality of the Commission.
- 1.2 Work with DCA to separate duties and the pay scale for the lead athletic inspector versus athletic inspector positions to enhance recruitment, retention, and accountability.
- 1.3 Research online training options for inspectors to increase efficiency
- 1.4 Provide training to staff on public relations and building relationships to increase efficiency.
- 1.5 Formally acknowledge that obtaining a license does not create entitlement to assignments.

## **Goal 6: Pension Plan**

*The Commission effectively manages the California Professional Boxers Pension Plan.*

- 6.1 Explore broadening the Pension Plan to include Mixed Martial Arts athletes to fill a perceived need and protect and service our stakeholders.
- 6.2 Explore options to increase outreach to fighters who are entitled to receive the pension.
- 6.3 Obtain bids to contract out a private investigator on locating eligible boxers to pay pensions out to entitled fighters.

## Goal 7: Outreach

*The Commission proactively communicates its mission, vision and goals to stakeholders.*

- 7.1. Investigate mandatory meeting requirements for specific licensees to further educate licensees and build relationships.
- 7.2. Promote the benefits of participating in combat sports to the public to address damaging perceptions.
- 7.3 Allow the Executive Officer to attend more industry events to market the commission, increase exposure, and keep informed on the industry.
- 7.4 Allow staff to attend industry events to promote the commission, remain informed, and build relationships.



## Strategic Planning Methodology

To understand the environment in which the Commission operates and identify factors that could impact the Commission's success, the California Department of Consumer Affairs' SOLID unit conducted an environmental scan of the internal and external environments by collecting information through the following methods:

- An online survey sent to stakeholders comprised of professionals, retired professionals, professional associations, promoters, media representatives and others who expressed interest in the strategic direction of the Commission. The online survey received 89 responses.
- One-on-one interviews with Commissioners, Executive Officer, and Assistant Executive Officer in July and August 2018.
- Focus group discussions with Commission staff in July 2018.

The most significant themes and trends identified from the environmental scan were discussed by the Commission during a strategic planning session facilitated by SOLID on October 2, 2018. This information guided the Commission in the development of the strategic goals and objectives outlined in this 2018 – 2023 strategic plan.



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*This strategic plan is based on stakeholder information and discussions facilitated by SOLID for the California State Athletic Commission in July and August of 2018. Subsequent amendments may have been made after Commission adoption of this plan.*

