Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: Iowa Administrative Code 875—Chapter 177
"Mixed Martial Arts"

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 90A.7
State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: Executive Order 10

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

October 24, 2024 10 to 10:30 a.m.	Lake Conference Room 6200 Park Avenue, Suite 100 Des Moines, Iowa

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis. Written or oral comments in response to this Regulatory Analysis must be received by of Labor Services Division no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

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Purpose and Summary

This proposed rulemaking repromulgates Chapter 177 in accordance with the goals and directives of Executive Order 10. Proposed Chapter 177 requires certain conduct, contest rules, equipment standards and crowd safety for mixed martial arts. Proposed Chapter 177 also adds professional mixed martial artist registration consistent with professional boxer registration.

Analysis of Impact

1. Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:

- Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:

Promoters of mixed martial arts bear the costs.

- Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:

Participants and spectators of the covered contests benefit.

2. Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:

- Quantitative description of impact:

No quantitative impact is discerned.

- Qualitative description of impact:

No qualitative impact is discerned.

3. Costs to the State:

- Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:

There are no specific financial costs to implement or enforce this rulemaking outside of any costs associated with the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing's statutory duties. This rulemaking does not add to the costs of the Department beyond existing personnel assigned to implement this chapter.

- Anticipated effect on state revenues:

There is no anticipated effect on state revenues.

4. Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:

Inaction would result in less safety in the covered events.

5. Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:

No less costly or less intrusive methods are known.

6. Alternative methods considered by the agency:

- Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:

No alternative methods were seriously considered.

- Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:

Not applicable.

Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.
- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking's compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.
- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

There is no special allowance for small businesses.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Rescind 875—Chapter 177 and adopt the following **new** chapter in lieu thereof:

CHAPTER 177
MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

875—177.1(90A) Definitions. The definitions contained in Iowa Code chapter 90A and the definitions in this rule apply to this chapter.

"Complimentary tickets," as used in Iowa Code section 90A.9, means tickets that are sold for less than 50 percent of the minimum price available to the general public and tickets for which no fee is charged.

"Contestant" means a person who fights or is scheduled to fight in a match.

"Event" means a program or card of one or more matches covered by Iowa Code chapter 90A.

"Match" means a mixed martial arts match.

"Mixed martial arts" means a style of athletic contest that includes a combination of combative skills from different disciplines of the martial arts, including, without limitation, grappling, kicking and striking.

"MMA" means mixed martial arts.

875—177.2(90A) Equipment specifications.

177.2(1) *Ring requirements.*

a. Size. The cage will not be less than 16 nor more than 36 feet square.

b. Enclosure. The ring will be equipped with an enclosure to limit persons from being tossed from the ring. The enclosure will be at least 6 feet high. The enclosure will consist of supports and enclosing material. The supports will be constructed of rigid material not more than 4 inches in diameter. The supports will be fastened securely to the floor or to the other supports. The supports will be protected by padding to avoid injury to any contestants striking the supports. The enclosing material will have openings not to exceed 4 inches in any direction. The enclosing material will not be rigid and will deflect at least ½ inch when ten pounds of pressure are exerted upon any point. All sharp objects or protrusions will be protected with padding.

c. Height. The ring will not be elevated more than 3½ feet above the floor. Suitable steps for the use of contestants will be provided.

d. Ring floor. The ring floor will be padded to the thickness of at least 1 inch with insulite or other soft materials to be approved by the commissioner. A canvas covering stretched tightly and laced to the ring platform will cover the padding.

e. Ring approval. The promoter shall make the ring and ring enclosure system available in the state of Iowa for inspection by the commissioner at least ten days prior to any event. The specifications in this rule are general, and so actual inspection will be necessary to verify adequate contestant safety prior to the event. If the commissioner has previously inspected the ring used by the promoter, the commissioner may waive the ten-day advance inspection.

177.2(2) *Bell.* A suitable bell or gong shall be provided and used.

177.2(3) *Time keeping.* The timekeeper shall be provided with a stopwatch and whistle.

875—177.3(90A) Event requirements.

177.3(1) *Officials.* Officials consist of three judges, two referees, the physician, and the timekeeper.

177.3(2) *Referee.* The referee is charged with the enforcement of all rules of the commissioner that apply to the performance and conduct of contestants and their seconds while in the ring. The referee shall wear latex gloves at all times while in the ring.

177.3(3) *Timekeeper.* The timekeeper will keep an exact record of time taken out at the request of a referee for an examination of a contestant by the physician, replacing a glove or adjusting any equipment during a round. The timekeeper will notify contestants at the beginning and end of each round. The timekeeper shall be impartial.

177.3(4) *Participants.* The contestants, seconds and managers are subject to approval by the commissioner.

177.3(5) *Scoring.* Three judges will score each match by evaluating striking, grappling, control of the cage, aggressiveness, and defense. The significance and number of legal strikes shall receive the greatest weight. The number of legal takedowns and reversals shall receive the second greatest weight. Control of the cage shall receive the third greatest weight. Aggression shall receive the fourth greatest weight. Defense shall receive the least weight. The winner of a round shall always receive a score of 10. The score for each round shall be one of the following:

a. If the contestants were evenly matched and neither dominated the round, the score shall be 10-10.

b. If a contestant won a round by a close margin, the score shall be 10-9.

c. If a contestant overwhelmingly dominated a round, the score shall be 10-8.

d. If a contestant totally dominated a round, the score shall be 10-7.

177.3(6) *Length of match.* Each match shall consist of no more than three rounds with no more than five minutes per round. However, the commissioner may authorize experienced contestants to compete in up to five rounds of up to five minutes each. There shall be a one-minute rest period between rounds. An overtime round shall not be allowed.

177.3(7) *Persons allowed in the cage.* No person other than the two contestants and the referee shall enter the cage during the match. However, the physician may enter the cage to examine a contestant upon the request of the referee.

177.3(8) *Seconds.*

a. Unless special permission is granted by the commissioner, there shall be no more than two seconds. Before the start of the match, each corner shall notify the referee of the name of the chief second.

b. Seconds shall not enter the cage except as authorized by this paragraph. The chief second may enter the cage after the timekeeper indicates the end of the round, and the chief second must leave before the beginning of a round.

c. Before leaving the ring at the start of the round, the seconds shall remove all obstructions, buckets, stools, bottles, towels and robes from the ring floor and ring enclosure.

d. Seconds shall not smoke in the ring or corners.

e. Seconds shall wear latex gloves at all times while attending any contestant.

f. Seconds shall not throw or splash water upon a contestant. Excess water on the floor of the cage shall be wiped up immediately. Water discharged from the mouth of a contestant shall be caught in a bucket.

177.3(9) *Decorum of officials and participants.*

a. Except as allowed in this subrule, a promoter, official, or participant shall not:

(1) Intentionally or recklessly strike or injure a person;

(2) Speak or act in a threatening manner toward a person; or

(3) Damage, destroy, or attempt to damage or destroy property.

b. The commissioner may immediately suspend the promoter's license if the promoter does not comply with paragraph 177.3(9)*"a"* or if the promoter does not take appropriate action to curtail activities in violation of paragraph 177.3(9)*"a"* by an official or a participant.

c. The commissioner may immediately suspend the authorization to participate in the event of an official or a participant who does not comply with paragraph 177.3(9)*"a."*

d. A contestant is exempt from subparagraphs 177.3(9)*"a"*(1) and 177.3(9)*"a"*(2) while interacting with the contestant's opponent during a round. However, if the round is stopped by the physician or referee for a time out, subparagraphs 177.4(9)*"a"*(1) and 177.4(9)*"a"*(2) shall apply to a contestant.

875—177.4(90A) Contestants.

177.4(1) *Time between matches.* No contestant shall be permitted to compete if the contestant participated in a boxing, wrestling, kickboxing, judo, or mixed martial arts event within the previous five-day period.

177.4(2) *Age restrictions.* No contestant under the age of 18 years shall be permitted to participate in any event except by special permission of the commissioner.

177.4(3) *Proper attire.* Contestants must wear proper athletic attire. Athletic attire of opposing contestants shall be of contrasting colors.

177.4(4) *Body protection.* All male contestants shall wear a foul proof protective cup. All female contestants shall wear foul proof pelvic area protection and breast protection.

177.4(5) *Mouth protection.* Each contestant shall wear a mouthpiece throughout each match. If the mouthpiece is knocked from a contestant's mouth, it shall be washed and then replaced.

177.4(6) *Gloves.* Gloves shall be approved martial arts gloves. All gloves shall be approved by the commissioner.

177.4(7) *Hand protection.* Only one roll of cotton gauze surgical bandage, not to exceed 2 inches in width and 10 yards in length, shall be used for the protection of each hand. Only one winding of surgeons' adhesive tape, not more than 1½ inches in width, may be placed directly on the hand to protect that part of the hand near the wrist. The tape may cross the back of the hand twice, but shall not extend within 1 inch of the knuckles when the hand is clenched to make a fist. Practice wraps (training hand wraps) may be used in lieu of gauze and tape.

177.4(8) *Hair protection.* Where necessary, hair shall be secured in a manner that it will not interfere with the vision or safety of either contestant.

177.4(9) *Weighing contestants.*

a. The promoter shall arrange for each contestant to be weighed in Iowa during the 24-hour period prior to the event.

b. Accurate scales shall be furnished by the promoter.

c. An official who has been approved by the commissioner shall weigh each contestant and accurately record the contestant's name and weight and the date and time. The weight records shall be submitted to the commissioner on the date of the event.

d. All contestants scheduled for an event shall be weighed on the same date.

e. Contestants shall be weighed in the presence of their opponents and without shoes, clothes or equipment.

f. Unless both contestants weigh more than 205 pounds, there shall not be a weight difference of more than 20 pounds between opponents without the commissioner's consent.

g. No less than two weeks before the event, the promoter shall notify the commissioner when and where contestants will be weighed.

177.4(10) *Examination of contestants.* On the day of the event, at a time and place to be approved by the commissioner, the ringside physician shall conduct a rigorous physical examination to determine the contestant's fitness to participate in an MMA match. A contestant deemed not fit by the physician shall not participate in the event.

875—177.5(90A) Procedural rules.

177.5(1) *Prohibited materials in ring.* Contestants shall not take anything not permitted or prohibited by these rules into the ring or pick up anything thrown into the ring and use the material or object in any way to gain an advantage over an opponent.

177.5(2) *Fouls.* As set forth in this subrule, the referee may penalize a contestant for fouls by disqualifying the contestant or by deducting points. The referee shall immediately determine if each foul is flagrant or accidental. "Flagrant" means the foul was intentional or reckless. "Accidental" means the foul was unintentional or incidental.

a. Disqualification. If the referee determines that the foul was flagrant and the contestant who was fouled is unable to continue due to an injury resulting from the foul, the contestant who committed the foul shall be disqualified.

b. Deduction of points. In determining the number of points to be deducted, the referee shall consider the nature and severity of the foul and its effect upon the opponent. As soon as practical after the foul, the referee shall notify the judges, contestants, and the commissioner of the number of points, if any, to be deducted from the score of the offender and whether the foul was flagrant or accidental. Points shall be deducted in the round in which the foul occurred.

c. Continuation of match. This paragraph governs how a match shall be continued if a foul that does not result in disqualification occurs.

(1) If a foul occurred but did not cause a serious injury, the referee may order the match to continue after a five-minute delay for recuperation. If subsequent fair blows aggravate the injury inflicted by a foul and the referee orders the contest stopped because of the injury, the outcome will be determined by scoring the completed rounds and the round during which the referee stopped the match.

(2) If an accidental foul results in a concussive impact to the head, if a contestant's chance of winning has been seriously jeopardized as a result of an accidental foul, or if a contestant is not able to continue the match due to an injury caused by an accidental foul, "no contest" will be declared or the winner will be determined based on points as set forth below.

1. "No contest" will be declared if:

- The foul occurs during the first two rounds of a match scheduled for three rounds or fewer.
- The foul occurs during the first three rounds of a match scheduled for four or five rounds.

2. The winner will be determined by scoring the completed rounds and the round during which the referee stopped the match if:

- The foul occurs during the third round of a match scheduled for three rounds.
- The foul occurs during the fourth or fifth round of a match scheduled for four or five rounds.

d. Prohibited acts. Each of the following actions is a foul:

(1) Butting with the head.
(2) Eye gouging of any kind.
(3) Biting.
(4) Hair pulling.
(5) Fishhooking.
(6) Groin attacks of any kind.
(7) Putting a finger into any orifice, cut, or laceration on an opponent.
(8) Small joint manipulation.
(9) Striking to the spine or behind the ears.
(10) Throat strikes of any kind, including, without limitation, grabbing the trachea.
(11) Clawing, pinching or twisting the flesh.
(12) Grabbing the clavicle.
(13) Kicking the head of a grounded opponent.
(14) Kneeing the head of a grounded opponent.
(15) Stomping a grounded opponent.
(16) Striking the kidney.
(17) Dropping or slamming an opponent on an opponent's head or neck.
(18) Throwing an opponent out of the cage or fenced area.
(19) Holding the shorts or gloves of an opponent.
(20) Spitting at an opponent.
(21) Engaging in any unsportsmanlike conduct that causes an injury to an opponent.
(22) Holding the ropes or the fence.
(23) Using abusive language in the cage or fenced area.
(24) Attacking an opponent during a break.
(25) Attacking an opponent who is under the care of the referee.
(26) Attacking an opponent after the bell has ended the round.
(27) Flagrantly disregarding the instructions of the referee.
(28) Timidity, including, without limitation, avoiding contact with an opponent, intentionally or consistently dropping the mouthpiece or faking an injury.
(29) Interference by a second.
(30) Throwing in the towel during competition.
(31) Threatening or intentionally striking or injuring any person other than the contestant's opponent.

177.5(3) *Mouth protection ejected.* If the mouth protection is knocked from a contestant's mouth, it shall be replaced with no penalty.

177.5(4) *Spitting mouth protection.* The referee shall caution a contestant who deliberately spits out a mouthpiece the first time and disqualify the contestant the second time.

177.5(5) *Gloves.* The gloves shall not be damaged or manipulated in any way by the contestants or their handlers. If a glove breaks or becomes undone during a match, the referee will instruct the timekeeper to take time out while the glove is being adjusted or replaced.

177.5(6) *Injury.* If a contestant claims to be injured or when a contestant has been injured seriously or knocked out, the referee shall immediately stop the fight and summon the attending ring physician to make an examination of the stricken fighter. If the physician decides that the contestant has been injured, the physician shall advise the referee of the severity of the injury. If the physician is of the opinion the injured contestant may be able to continue, the physician shall order a five-minute intermission, after which the physician shall make another examination and again advise the referee of the injured contestant's condition. Managers, handlers and seconds shall not attend to the stricken fighter, except at the request of the physician.

875—177.6(90A) Decision. A professional match ends when:

177.6(1) A contestant submits.

177.6(2) The timekeeper indicates that time has expired in the final round of the match. The win will be awarded based on the judges' scores.

177.6(3) The referee stops the match.

177.6(4) The referee disqualifies a contestant for committing a foul pursuant to rule 875—177.5(90A).

177.6(5) A second or manager throws a towel into the cage to indicate the defeat of a contestant. The referee shall stop the match and award the win to the opponent.

177.6(6) A second or manager is in the cage when prohibited. The referee shall stop the match and award the win to the opponent.

875—177.7(90A) Forfeit of purse. The commissioner, in consultation with the referee, has the power to declare forfeited all or any part of a contestant's purse whenever in the commissioner's judgment the contestant was not performing in good faith.

875—177.8(90A) Professional fighter registration. Each professional MMA fighter residing in Iowa shall register with the commissioner consistent with 875—subrules 173.54(2) through 173.54(4).

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 90A.2 and 90A.5.