

**SUBJECT:** Eliminating licensing for ringside physicians and timekeepers

**COMMITTEE:** Licensing and Administrative Procedures — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 5 ayes — Smith, Kuempel, Geren, Guillen, Price  
0 nays  
4 absent — Gooden, Gutierrez, Miles, S. Thompson

**WITNESSES:** For — None  
Against — None  
On — William Kuntz, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation

**BACKGROUND:** State law requires that ringside physicians and timekeepers for combative sports be licensed under Chapter 2052 of the Occupation Code.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 1551 would end the requirement for ringside physicians and timekeepers for combative sports to be licensed by the Texas Commission on Licensing and Regulation. Instead, the commission could establish criteria and procedures for the assignment of ringside physicians and timekeepers. Ringside physicians would have to have an unrestricted and unlimited license to practice medicine in the state.

The Department of Licensing and Regulation would return a prorated portion of the fee paid for a license to anyone holding a valid ringside physician or timekeeper license. Pending disciplinary or administrative proceedings related to a violation of licensing or registration requirements would be dismissed. Administrative penalties for violations of requirements before the effective date of the bill still could be collected. Pending prosecution would not be affected and the former law would apply to offenses committed before the effective date of the bill.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2013.

**SUPPORTERS** CSHB 1551 would give the Commission on Licensing and Regulation the

**SAY:** flexibility to establish its own rules to determine the criteria that ringside physicians had to meet. Currently, the only criteria to receive a ringside physician's license are to be licensed to practice medicine in Texas. Consequently, the commission has little authority to revoke the ringside physician's license of any person who has a current license to practice medicine in Texas.

Because a ringside physician's license is entirely dependent on having a license to practice medicine in Texas, the current commission's license is redundant and unnecessary. Similarly, because there are no criteria to receive a timekeeper's license, this license is unnecessary.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** CSHB 1551 should strengthen licensing requirements for ringside physicians instead of eliminating the license altogether and relying on commission rules. Texas has weak requirements for ringside physicians compared with other states and more stringent regulations should be placed in state statute.

**NOTES:** The committee substitute differs from the bill as filed by requiring a ringside physician's license to practice medicine be unrestricted and unlimited and requiring individuals to agree to act as ringside physicians.

The companion bill, SB 618 by Carona, was passed by the Senate by a vote of 31-0 on March 13 and reported favorably by the House Committee on Licensing and Administrative Procedures on April 23.