

IMPROVING THE INTEGRITY, SAFETY & ENJOYMENT OF SPORTS

AS A LIFELONG SPORTS FAN, SENATOR MCCAIN FOUGHT TO IMPROVE THE INTEGRITY, SAFETY AND ENJOYMENT OF SPORTS.

Boxing Reform

As a high school wrestler and amateur boxer, Senator McCain made boxing reform one of his signature efforts in Congress. Throughout his career, Senator McCain introduced, passed, and championed numerous pieces of legislation to improve the sport for both athletes and fans.

Senator McCain was the lead cosponsor of the [Professional Boxing Safety Act](#) and the [Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act of 2000](#), which enacted major reforms to professional boxing. Signed into law in 1996 and 2000 respectively, these bills established uniform health and safety standards for professional boxers, and advanced basic protections for boxers against the sometimes coercive, exploitative, and unethical business practices of promoters, managers, and sanctioning organizations. The *Professional Boxing Amendments Act*, the *National Boxing Commission Act*, and the *Integrity in Professional Sports Act*, also sponsored by Senator McCain, all sought to refine and further legitimize the boxing industry.

Building on these bills, Senator McCain used his platform to improve athlete health and [safety standards](#), and raise awareness of the dangers of [concussions](#) among boxers and other professional athletes.

Urging a Posthumous Pardon for Boxing Legend Jack Johnson

Senator McCain worked for more than a decade to secure a posthumous pardon for [John Arthur "Jack" Johnson](#), the first African-American heavyweight boxing champion, which President Trump granted in 2018. Johnson's career and reputation were ruined after he was unjustly charged with transporting a white woman across state lines in violation of the *Mann Act* in 1913. Senator McCain continually brought awareness to this injustice by introducing resolutions, writing letters to the president, and speaking out in favor of his pardon and incredible talent.

Eliminating Sports Blackouts

As an enthusiastic Arizona Cardinals fan, Senator McCain was outraged by the National Football League's (NFL) "blackout" rule, which enabled the league not to air NFL games on local broadcasting networks if a home game did not sell out at least 72 hours before kickoff. In 2013 and again in 2015, Senator McCain co-sponsored the [FANS Act](#), legislation that would require professional leagues to meet basic obligations to fans in order to continue receiving substantial benefits, including exemptions from antitrust law. In addition, he communicated these concerns to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which unanimously voted to [eliminate the federal sports blackout rule](#). Senator McCain's relentless advocacy eventually led to the NFL's 2015 vote to suspend their [blackout policy](#) indefinitely.

Ending Patriotism for Profit

In 2015, Senators McCain and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) uncovered evidence that the Department of Defense had been spending taxpayer dollars on sports marketing contracts that included displays of patriotism such as honoring service members at halftime. Their report, titled, "[Paid Patriotism](#)," revealed that the Department had spent \$10.4 million on marketing and advertising with professional sports teams and leagues between 2012 and 2015. While some of these funds were used for legitimate purposes, millions were spent on paid patriotism, including on-field color guard performances, enlistment and re-enlistment ceremonies, performances of the national anthem, full-field flag details, and ceremonial first pitches and puck drops. The senators eventually championed an [amendment](#) prohibiting the Department of Defense from spending taxpayer dollars to honor American soldiers at sporting events. Their report also prompted professional sports leagues including the NFL to donate profits earned from displays of paid patriotism back to [American taxpayers](#).