PROFESSIONAL BOXING SAFETY ACT

● Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, as the Senate comes to the close of this session, I want to express a few words on the passage of H.R. 4167, The Professional Boxing Safety Act. I am extremely pleased that the 104th Congress will be the first in 35 years—since the days of the Kefauver Committee—to reform professional boxing. The bill has been sent to the President for his consideration.

I thank my colleague, Senator BRYAN, who represents the premier boxing State in our country, for his great help and counsel on this bipartisan legislation. In the House, Subcommittee Chairman MIKE OXLEY, Chairman BLILEY of the Commerce Committee, Rep. PAT WILLIAMS, and Rep. JOHN DINGELL all played vital roles in getting this historic legislation passed in that body.

I have been an avid fan of professional boxing all my life. I still go to several fights each year. Boxing can be a thrilling and honorable contest between highly skilled athletes. At its best, professional boxing for me and millions of other fans is the ''sweet science.''

But professional boxing in our country is also a big money, often unregulated industry that has been aptly described as the ''red light district of sports.'' I regret it has earned that distinction through decades of controversy, scandals, and ethical abuses.

Of primary importance for me has been the lack of proper health and safety measures for the unknown, journeymen boxers who sustain the sport. They may never make more than a few hundred dollars a night, and are subject to physical and financial exploitation from unscrupulous promoters. It is the only profession they know.

As soon as they are of no use to a promoter, they are discarded. Left with the debilitating effects that result from years of punishment. No pension, no medical care, no assistance from any league or association in the industry.

Other major sports have well-run private associations that provide benefits to their athletes, and address ethical abuses on behalf of the public. Boxing has none.

With no private organization in this industry, and uneven public oversight at the State level, it is appropriate for the Congress to act on behalf of the athletes whose health and safety is often put at risk.

In fact, five States have absolutely no public oversight of professional boxing. That can easily lead to dangerous or fraudulent situations.

This bipartisan legislation, H.R. 4167, is closely based on the bill Senator BRYAN and I passed through the Senate last October—S. 187. It is a modest but practical bill. It establishes a series of health, safety, and ethical standards for each professional boxing event in the United States.

This act will greatly assist dedicated State boxing commissioners as they strive to responsibly regulate this industry. The Association of Boxing Commissions strongly endorsed S. 187, and I received letters from boxing officials from all over the United States in support of it.

This is not a Washington-based, bureaucratic solution to the problems affecting boxing that are matters of public concern. I sought the views of State officials from each commission in the country before drafting this legislation.

It is a common sense, limited proposal that puts the interest of the athletes above those of the promoters who would otherwise cut corners on safety. The primary effect of the bill will be to ensure that all boxing events are supervised by State officials. H.R. 4167 will ensure that a modest level of health and safety measures are provided.

It will also assist State commissioners as they work with their colleagues in neighboring States to stop fraudulent or unsafe events. All medical suspensions placed on injured or debilitated boxers must be respected under this bill.

A significant provision added in the House will prevent conflicts of interest in the industry. State commissioners who serve the public interest in regulating professional boxing will be prohibited from receiving compensation from the business side of the sport. That will help address the troublesome influence that the self-serving sanctioning bodies have gained over the years.

Importantly, I'd like to emphasize what this bill does not do. It does not require appropriations; it does not create a Federal boxing bureaucracy or entity of any kind. And it does not impose costly mandates on State commissions.

H.R. 4167, the Professional Boxing Safety Act, properly leaves regulation of the sport to State officials. But it will strengthen health and safety standards on behalf of the athletes, and require responsible oversight by these commissioners.

I believe this legislation will make professional boxing a safer and more honorable sport. That's a solid achievement for industry members, State officials, and the fans who long for it to be as great a sport as it can be.●

FCC'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1996

● Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I'd like to take a moment today to offer some observations on the FCC's recent attempts to implement the important Telecommunications Act that we passed during the 104th Congress. I ask unanimous consent that my comments appear as if presented in morning business.

As we all know, prior to the 104th Congress, we had been debating communications issues for almost 20 years with little forward progress. During the 104th, the chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, Senator LARRY PRESSLER, hammered out a balanced, bipartisan piece of legislation that addressed the extremely technical and controversial issues raised in deregulating the broadcasting and communications industries. When we all gathered in the Library of Congress on February 8, 1996, to witness the signing of this historic legislation into law, I think pretty much all of us were proud of our collective accomplishment. We hoped and expected that our efforts would produce new services, new competitive options, new jobs and investment, and a competitive marketplace.

However, recently, I have been watching the highly controversial efforts of the FCC at it has worked to implement this new law. And, as Yogi Berra once said, it's starting to look like deja vu all over again.

Congress hammered out a consensus blueprint—one that was fair and balanced, and one that all the various industries signed onto. That process took a lot of work; in fact, the Senate-House conference took over 4 months. However, I am concerned with the manner in which the FCC has gone about implementing this bill. In fact, yesterday's Wall Street Journal contained an article which identified many of the problems arising from the FCC's implementation of the Telecommunications Act. I ask unanimous consent that a copy of that article be printed in the RECORD at the end of my statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I am concerned that the FCC's implementation of the Interconnection provision—the FCC's order implementing this provision is 932 pages and contains some 4,062 footnotes—has alienated virtually all of the State regulators, and it has generated a massive appeal to the courts by the local exchange companies—this represents about three-quarters of the entire industry. Thus, the balanced, consensus approach that Congress achieved has, apparently, been set aside, and now, unfortunately, we are seeing these issues before the courts.

Mr. President, this situation is not good for anyone. Confusion, industry strife, and massive court filings don't facilitate the construction of the information superhighway. Because I believe that the U.S. competitiveness in the global information economy will be dependent upon how quickly we upgrade our communications networks, it is absolutely essential that the FCC not adopt implementation policies that frustrate the timely deployment of information and communications infrastructure. I encourage the FCC to go back to the legislation that we passed and to follow the roadmap that Congress outlined. That roadmap calls for,