



News Release

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Arizona Boxing and Mixed Martial Arts Commissioner, Joe Pennington, Retiring After 24 Years of Service

PHOENIX – After serving over 24 years as a Commissioner on the Arizona Boxing and Mixed Martial Arts (“MMA”) Commission, Joe Pennington presided over his final commission meeting on Wednesday, February 19, 2025. Pennington was appointed to the Arizona Boxing and MMA Commission in 2001 by Governor Jane Hull and served under the next four administrations of Janet Napolitano, Jan Brewer, Doug Ducey, and Katie Hobbs.

During his tenure, Commissioner Pennington played a key role in strengthening safety protocols for fighters and reinforcing Arizona’s position as a leader in combat sports regulation. He is most proud of the Commission's commitment to combatant safety, exemplified by the adoption of the concussion protocol and testing, the passage of SB1679, the Boxing/MMA Omnibus Bill, in 2024, and the adoption of rules for Boxing, MMA, Kickboxing, Muay Thai, and Tough Man competitions. Last fall, the Arizona Boxing & MMA Commission was recognized as "Commission of the Year" at the North American Boxing Federation Awards Banquet for its regulatory efforts.

“It has been a pleasure to work alongside Commissioner Pennington over the last few years,” said Danny Vella, Executive Director of ADG’s Boxing and MMA Division. “I am grateful for his nearly two and a half decades of dedicated service and commitment to enhancing combat sports regulation in Arizona. I wish Mr. Pennington the best in his retirement and look forward to the continued impact of his tremendous contributions.”

“On behalf of the Arizona Department of Gaming, I want to extend our deepest gratitude to Commissioner Joe Pennington for his unwavering dedication and service to the Boxing & Mixed Martial Arts community in Arizona,” said Director Jackie Johnson, ADG. “Through multiple administrations, his commitment to integrity, fairness, and the growth of combat sports has left a lasting impact on the industry and the state. We thank him for his years of leadership and public service.”

Serving in his final commission meeting, Commissioner Pennington was presented a commendation from Executive Director Vella on behalf of Governor Katie Hobbs, receiving well wishes from several attendees of the [Arizona Boxing and MMA Commission meeting on Wednesday, February 19, 2025](#). The Department and its staff wish Mr. Pennington a joyous and adventurous retirement, and we are forever grateful for his 24 years of service to combat sports safety and regulation in Arizona.



From left to right: Ara J. Feinstein, M.D., Commissioner; Danny A. Vella, Executive Director, Boxing and MMA Division, Arizona Department of Gaming; Joe Pennington; and Scott B. Fletcher, Chairman.

About ADG

Established by the Arizona State Legislature in 1995, ADG is the state regulatory agency for [tribal gaming](#), [racing and pari-mutuel/simulcast wagering](#), [event wagering/fantasy sports](#) and [unarmed combat sports](#). ADG also provides and supports education, prevention, and treatment programs for people and families affected by problem gambling through its [Division of Problem Gambling](#) and 24-hour confidential helpline, 1-800-NEXT-STEP.

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