

## State Athletic chairman resigns

By [Troy Schulte](#)

This article was published June 20, 2012 at 3:55 a.m.

LITTLE ROCK — Jason Stuart resigned as chairman of Arkansas' State Athletic Commission on Monday, citing time the post took from his regular business as a reason more than rifts between the commission and the community it regulates.

Stuart has served since 2009 on the commission that regulates combative sports such as boxing, professional wrestling and mixed martial arts in the state and has been its chairman since last year. He acknowledged Tuesday disagreements between fighters, promoters and the commission regarding the enforcement of rules and regulations.

He said he hopes his resignation helps cool tensions between the fight community and the commission.

"I've been needing to resign for about a year to focus back on our law practice," said Stuart, who estimated working 3,000 voluntary hours since 2009. "They [members of the Arkansas fight community] are p\* off at me. If it becomes clear that I'm hurting the commission because they're trying to rail against me, fine, I needed to resign anyway. Hopefully, it'll stop."

Lydia Robertson, vice chair of the commission, said commission members were notified when Stuart sent them a letter Monday night.

"I'm not surprised," she said, "but I'm deeply disappointed."

Little Rock boxer Rashad Ganaway, 29, filed suit against Stuart last month seeking lost income he said stems from Stuart, who was formerly Ganaway's manager, refusing to license him for fights in Arkansas in 2010. Stuart denies the allegations.

Tim Lueckenhoff, president of the Association of Boxing Commissions, also said Stuart's management of Ganaway was in violation of the Professional Boxing Safety Act of 1996 that states no member of a commission that regulates boxing can manage fighters.

In a letter sent to the commission in February, Lueckenhoff encouraged the commission to schedule an independent investigation or ask Stuart for his resignation. Stuart said he managed Ganaway, but added he did it before he was appointed to the commission.

“If Mr. Stuart felt he was innocent of any violations of federal law, he should have accepted my suggestion of an independent investigation,” Lueckenhoff said in an e-mail Tuesday. “But he chose to ignore those suggestions.”

Stuart said a small budget — the commission’s revenue for fiscal 2011 was \$116,318 according to a state audit — prevented the commission from conducting such an investigation and commissioner Richard Anderson was tasked with leading an internal investigation, which Stuart said is expected to be revealed at the commission’s August meeting.

Stuart said the commission has tried to put forth more strict and more fair regulations.

During the commission’s May meeting, Stuart appointed a subcommittee that hopes to rewrite the commission’s regulations. The subcommittee, which has met one time, includes one commission member and five members of the fight community.

Nathan Kirby, a Little Rock mixed martial arts promoter who is on the subcommittee, said he hopes what results is a simpler rule book that is easier to understand for fighters, promoters and the commission.

“I understand that if we don’t have regulation, then we have chaos,” Kirby said. “If we have too much regulation, then I don’t know why we’re in America. And that’s what it was getting toward.”

*Sports, Pages 23 on 06/20/2012*