

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By David Helmsin

Legislative interest in the condition of California's horse racing industry continues to build. On July 27th, the Senate Governmental Organization Committee held a hearing at Del Mar Race Track to discuss "Horse Racing in California – How Will it Survive into the Future?"

The hearing was chaired by Senator Dean Florez and featured five separate panels with representation from several tiers of the horseracing community — The California Horse Racing Board, racing associations, horsemen, jockeys, pari-mutuel clerks, and advanced deposit wagering companies.

Representing TOC on the Horsemen Panel, Drew Couto underscored the importance of immediate action to improve the economics of the sport and enable California to compete with increasing purses offered in other states.

In closing the hearing, Senator Florez highlighted the need to maintain a "vibrant" and "successful" horse racing industry and committed to holding additional hearings on potential solutions to address related issues.

With respect to legislation currently under consideration in Sacramento, the status of the bills most significant to TOC is as follows:

AB 203 (Harman) would allow Los Alamitos to supplement purses for certain races. This bill was amended to address concerns raised by TOC and is currently up for consideration on the Senate Floor.

AB 449 (Plescia) was signed into law on July 21st. This bill reflects an agreement between TOC and California Thoroughbred Trainers to extend the sunset for the current statute governing trainer participation on the TOC board by

one year. During that time, it is envisioned that a new appointment process will be developed for trainers on the Board.

AB 937 (Wyland) was placed in the Senate inactive file on July 1st. TOC is currently working with the bill's sponsor, Del Mar, to resolve concerns over the changes proposed in how satellite wagering facility deficits would be funded.

AB 1180 (Torrico) is currently on the Assembly Floor awaiting concurrence with amendments made in the Senate. The bill reflects a number of amendments worked out between TOC and the sponsor, Jockeys Guild, in policies governing on-track medical services, accidents, jockey fees, safety equipment, etc.

SB 124 (Denham) was signed into law on July 27th. This TOC sponsored bill extends for two years the current funding mechanism for the California

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Marketing Committee.

SB 677 (Murray) is currently on the Assembly Floor. This bill allows for the establishment of 5 additional satellite wagering facilities in Los Angeles County and 2 additional facilities in Alameda County. TOC is opposed to a key element of the bill which would require consent from all affected horseracing entities before a new facility could be opened within 30 (rather than the current 20) miles of that site.

The legislature adjourned the first year of the 2005-06 session on September 9th. Legislative action had to be taken on all pending bills by that time. The Governor then has 30 days to sign or veto the bills that reach his desk. If the Governor takes no action, a bill automatically becomes law a month after he receives it.



Coming Soon...

TOC's New, Improved Website!

Watch for details about the "launch date" in the January issue of Owners'Circle.