

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By David Helmsin

The 2005/06 legislative session ended on August 31, without the usual end-of-session partisan battles. This year, the Legislature actually helped the Governor achieve a timely budget and a historic public works bond package. The Governor reciprocated by supporting typically Democratic measures on greenhouse gas emissions, increasing the minimum wage, and a discounted drugs plan for the uninsured. This uncharacteristic level of cooperation has given the Governor a double-digit advantage over his Democratic challenger going into the November elections.

There was a minor end-of-session skirmish over ratification of nine tribal gaming compacts signed by the Governor in August. Concerned over the negative impact these compacts would have on organized labor and the horseracing industry, the Legislature ultimately closed shop without ratifying any of the compacts. TOC lobbied hard in the last few weeks of session to ensure that any deal on the controversial compacts included some new funding for horseracing to offset – “mitigate” – the impact of tribal gaming in California and the competitive disadvantage the California racing industry faces with gaming supported racing in other states.

Before closing down, the legislature sent the Governor 1,161 bills. The following is a recap of actions taken on bills of interest to Thoroughbred owners, including some sent to the Governor for signing:

AB 2409 (Yee) Wagering on Historical Races

Allows the CHRB to authorize pari-mutuel wagering on historical races and specify how revenues from those races would be distributed.

TOC Position: Support **Action:** Withdrawn from Senate G.O. Committee. Dead for the year.

SB 1229 (Florez) Advertising

Makes it unlawful for any person to advertise, or to facilitate the advertisement of nonparimutuel wagering on horse races.

TOC Position: Support **Action:** Passed and signed by the Governor.

SB 1464 (Denham) Polytrack

Requires the installation of a polymer synthetic type racing surface by December 31, 2007 as a condition of issuing a license to any track that operates four weeks of continuous thoroughbred racing in a calendar year.

TOC Position: Support **Action:** Held by Assembly G.O. Committee. Dead for the year.

SB 51 (Migden) Owner Representation

Modifies the composition of TOC Board, revises member voting qualifications, and establishes a Northern California purse subcommittee.

TOC Position: Support **Action:** Passed and signed by the Governor.

SB 1805 (Florez) Workers' Compensation Funding

Allows the use of exotic pari-mutuel pool funds to defray the cost of workers' compensation insurance and to reimburse racing associations for safety related expenditures.

TOC Position: Support **Action:** Passed and signed by the Governor.

TOC will spend the next few months working with industry stakeholders, Legislative leaders, and the Administration on an aggressive agenda for the new 2007/08 Legislative Session. At a minimum, it is anticipated that we will resume our quest for funding relative to the tribal gaming compacts and ensure maximum benefit from the reauthorization of ADW statutes required next year.

Owners are encouraged to contact Don Valpredo – Legislative Committee Chair, Drew Couto – President, and/or Guy Lamothe – TOC Executive Director, with any suggestions for next year's legislative program.