



Across Florida

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Animal lovers revive push end to greyhound racing in Florida

by Dara Kam | December 6th, 2011



Two animal-loving groups are pushing a bill that would allow greyhound tracks to stop racing dogs but allow the tracks to keep operating the more lucrative card rooms.

Dog racing attendance has declined, as have revenues, and most people who go to the tracks ignore the greyhounds in favor of placing their bets on poker.

[GREY2K USA](#), a group formed to end dog racing around the country, and the national [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals](#), are both behind a measure sponsored by Delray Beach Democratic Sen. [Maria Sachs](#), who sponsored a similar "decoupling" proposal earlier this year.

The ASPCA this morning released a poll showing that a majority of voters view the dog racing industry unfavorably. And GREY2K released a report documenting abuse and neglect of the dogs since 2004.

And the attendance and revenues have dropped dramatically at the tracks since 2004, according to data provided by state agencies included in the report.

Since 2004, the total amount gambled on racing at Florida's 13 greyhound tracks, including the Palm Beach Kennel Club, decreased by 35 percent, paid attendance went down by 69 percent, and state tax revenues declined by 72 percent, the report found.

At many tracks, the dogs are forced to live in small cages and state regulators have written up at least nine cases of severe neglect associated with the kennels over the past seven years, the report found.

"Greyhound racing is cruel and inhumane and must end," GREY2K USA president and general counsel Christine Dorchak told reporters at a press conference outside the House chambers this morning.

Forcing dog track operators to run the greyhounds so they can keep their card rooms open "is a mandate for cruelty," ASPCA director of government relations Ann Church said.

PBKC owners won't stop racing the dogs and support the

measure, as they did earlier this year, in part because it will make their races more lucrative. Only three of the state's existing 13 dog tracks, including PBKC, are expected to continue to keep running the dogs if the bill becomes law. Supporters of the bill say it was not intended to end dog racing but to allow struggling tracks to stay open with other betting options.

Although both chambers approved Sachs' bill, [the measure died on the last day of session in May](#) when GOP leaders could not resolve differences over tax credits.

With the legislature's attention this session now directed to a bigger gambling proposal that would allow up to three casinos to open – presumably in South Florida – Sachs' bill ([SB 382](#)) stands a good chance of passage when lawmakers reconvene next month, proponents say.

But the bill likely won't fly without a fight from the dog breeders, who contend that ending the races will kill jobs and cost the state millions of dollars in tax revenues from the industry.

[Greyhound Racing](#)

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