

Greyhounds will continue to die at racetracks

A racing greyhound dies in Florida every three days. The state coffers of Florida lose, on average, between \$1 million and \$3 million each year by racing greyhounds. So, naturally, the logical question to ask is, Why? Why are we still racing greyhounds when more than 100 greyhounds die each year, and it costs the state millions of dollars annually to subsidize this archaic, horrific "sport"?

Florida is one of the last bastions of greyhound racing (43 states do not allow greyhound racing) with 12 active Florida facilities. A majority of these racetrack facilities lose millions each year as a result of racing dogs. A requirement was put into place in the late 1990s mandating a certain number of dog races occur each year in order to maintain the more lucrative poker rooms and slot machines.

Florida is the only state besides Alabama that doesn't require greyhound-injury reporting; last session Florida should have been removed from that list. Injury reporting is a simple concept requiring that dog tracks turn over the racing greyhounds' injury records that they already keep to the Department of Professional and Business Regulation.

This level of transparency doesn't sit well with all of the tracks, as it could lead to a potential outcry when the public realizes how prolific both injuries and deaths are at these tracks. Some typical ways that the 107 greyhounds that died in Florida in the last year include: being electrocuted after tripping and colliding into the uncovered electric inner circle that goes around the track; being euthanized after suffering a leg fracture; and dying of heatstroke. If the public were truly aware of the extent of harm being these beautiful creatures endure, we would surely have changed the law by now.

House Speaker Will Weatherford didn't agree to take up the bill mandating injury reporting. My simple bill passed unanimously out of the Senate with support from Attorney General Bondi and the Senate's first lady, Vicki Gaetz. Instead of watching her husband preside as Senate president for the last time, the first lady of the Senate chose to sit in the House chamber to show her support of the bill. Vicki Gaetz is the first first lady of the Senate to take a stand on legislation in my 14 years in the Legislature. The House never heard the bill. Apparently, political gamesmanship trumped transparency and the humane treatment of animals.

I plan to sponsor the bill again next year and hope that, by then, we will all recognize that the humane treatment of animals is both morally correct and fiscally responsible.

Eleanor Sobel, state senator, Hollywood