



## GREYHOUND RACING IS INADEQUATELY REGULATED

In five of the six remaining racing states, there are state racing commissions in place to regulate and oversee greyhound racing. In Alabama, there are two county commissions that each regulate a single dog track.

### Racing Commissions have a history of regulatory failures

- Both Alabama commissions have a history of failing to take decisive action over rule violations. For example, the Mobile County Racing Commission only fined a greyhound trainer \$50 after a dog tested positive for cocaine.<sup>1</sup> The Birmingham Racing Commission has also approved multiple bailouts totaling nearly \$800,000 dollars for the Birmingham Race Course since 2010.<sup>2</sup>
- Two state racing commissions have acknowledged that they do not inspect the areas where racing greyhounds are confined: The WV Racing Commission and the Mobile County Racing Commission.<sup>3</sup>
- Under Florida law, felons can be licensed in the greyhound racing industry if they are given a special waiver from the state Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering.<sup>4</sup> From January 2013 through July 2014, 79 applications for waivers were granted by the Division and 114 were denied. Of the waivers that were granted, applicants had offenses related to theft, fraud, and assault.
- The Florida Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering is slow to act on disciplinary matters, sometimes taking years to punish licensees who violate animal welfare rules. In many cases, the penalties handed down are also insufficient. For example, in February 2011, investigators found “unclean conditions and greyhounds with inadequate bedding” during multiple inspections of a kennel at the Florida Kennel Compound.<sup>5</sup> The kennel’s trainer Jose Lopez also failed to provide proof of vaccinations for approximately 50 greyhounds and one greyhound was found in the kennel with an untreated toe injury. The Division concluded that Lopez “caused unnecessary suffering” to the greyhounds and a case was opened against him. However, it took three years for the case to be closed, at which point Lopez was only fined \$250 and suspended for ten days. In the meantime Lopez was allowed to work at Florida dog tracks.

### The greyhound industry is an ineffective self-regulator

The National Greyhound Association and its affiliates have a history of covering up cases of misconduct and animal neglect, have shown a double standard in their treatment toward certain industry figures, and displayed a lack of willingness to press charges against offenders.

<sup>1</sup> Mobile County Racing Commission, *Ruling of the Judges against Harold Williams* (Mobile, AL: Mobile County Racing Commission, January 16, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph D. Bryant, “Out of luck and out of money: Birmingham Race Course three years late on property taxes, seeks bailout from board,” *Alabama.com*, May 23, 2014, [http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2014/05/out\\_of\\_luck\\_and\\_out\\_of\\_money\\_b.html](http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2014/05/out_of_luck_and_out_of_money_b.html) (accessed May 28, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> West Virginia Racing Commission, *FOIA Summary #20140601* (Charleston, WV: West Virginia Racing Commission, June 6, 2014); Michael E. Box (Chairman, Mobile County Racing Commission), letter to GREY2K USA, January 3, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Rule 61D-5.001.

<sup>5</sup> Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering, *Consent Order Case No. 2011006969* (Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, March 13, 2014).

## West Virginia Greyhound Owners and Breeders Association fought state anti-cruelty policy

In 2013, Sam Burdette, the president of the association, stated that “cruelty is a very relative, subjective subject” and that a trainer may have to “pick a dog up and throw it” in order to stop a dog fight.<sup>6</sup> Burdette was the only individual to request changes, including a definition of what would precisely qualify as greyhound cruelty.

## The NGA failed to take action against a notable individual

In 2002, greyhound trainer Ursula O’Donnell was investigated for her role in the killing of over 2,000 racing greyhounds.<sup>7</sup> It was alleged that O’Donnell hired a man named Robert Rhodes to shoot and kill greyhounds under her care. She was charged with felony animal cruelty and criminal conspiracy, but the case was later tossed out when Rhodes died. Despite the serious nature of the case and the fact that there was enough evidence to charge O’Donnell with felony animal cruelty, the NGA never took action against her. The O’Donnells are a prominent family within the industry that has raised, trained, and owned greyhounds for decades.<sup>8</sup>



*A dead greyhound at the Robert Rhodes farm. Photograph by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, 2002*

*Last Updated January 1, 2016*

<sup>6</sup> Dave Boucher, “Racing commission approves animal cruelty policy,” *The Charleston Daily Mail*, August 21, 2013, <http://www.charlestondaily.com/news/201308200185> (accessed June 25, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, *Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering, Investigative Report No. 2002004248* (Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, June 2002); “Greyhound Protection Group Calls for State Investigation After Trainer Is Asked to Leave Naples Dog Track,” *WLOX 13*, January 22, 2010, <http://www.wlox.com/story/11867444/greyhound-protection-group-calls-for-state-investigation-after-trainer-is-asked-to-leave-naples-dog-track> (accessed June 25, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Beyer, “These Greyhound Owners Aren’t Barking Up the Wrong Tree,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1985, [http://articles.latimes.com/1985-03-17/sports/sp-35476\\_1\\_greyhound-kennel](http://articles.latimes.com/1985-03-17/sports/sp-35476_1_greyhound-kennel) (accessed June 25, 2014); Michael J. Mooney, “Embattled Greyhound Trainer Has Been Investigated Since Arrest,” *Broward Palm Beach New Times*, February 11, 2010, [http://blogs.browardpalmbeach.com/pulp/2010/02/embattled\\_greyhound\\_trainer\\_ha.php](http://blogs.browardpalmbeach.com/pulp/2010/02/embattled_greyhound_trainer_ha.php) (accessed June 25 2014).