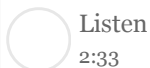


Fla. Greyhound Assoc., Bipartisan Group Of Lawmakers Continue Clash Over Decoupling

By [SASCHA CORDNER](#) (/PEOPLE/SASCHA-CORDNER)



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Florida is one of seven states with greyhound racing. Many tracks are struggling to meet costs, but continue because a law requires them to hold races in order to keep their card races. But, a group of lawmakers is pushing for “decoupling” the tracks and the cardrooms, some are not too happy about the idea.

“Florida is the leading state for Greyhound racing. We have more tracks, more races than any other state remaining in the country,” said Rep. Jared Moskowitz (D-Coral Springs).

Moskowitz is one lawmaker pushing for decoupling greyhound racing from the gambling industry.

“And, so what we’ve been talking about for years now—as chairman Gaetz and I have been doing this now for several years—is allowing those businesses to make a business decision on whether or not they still want to continue this practice at their facility. That’s what’s being talked about from a legislative standpoint—nothing else. No one is trying to ban greyhound racing.”

Moskowitz, joined by Fort Walton Beach Republican Representative Matt Gaetz, spoke at a press conference Thursday, pointing to the release of a report by a greyhound protection organization called Grey2K USA.

The report outlines how many greyhounds have died in Florida, talks about how tracks are losing money on greyhound racing, and highlights the injuries greyhounds face while racing.

But, the Florida Greyhound Association’s David Bishop disagrees with most of the report. Bishop says while he acknowledges the industry needs to step up its injury and death reporting of dogs on the track, he says he and lawmakers part ways on how to get that done.

Bishop says while the word “decoupling” may sound harmless, it would have dire consequences on the industry.



<http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wfsu/files/201502/GaetzMoskowitzGinger0212.JPG>

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fort Walton Beach) looks on as Rep. Jared Moskowitz (D-Coral Springs) pets Ginger, a rescued greyhound, before the start of a press conference pushing for decoupling greyhound racing.

Credit Sascha Cordner / WFSU-FM



Florida Greyhound Association's David Bishop responding to the earlier press conference, pushing for decoupling. He's joined by Jack Cory (middle), the FGA's head of government affairs.
Credit Sascha Cordner / WFSU-FM

"Let's make no mistake about it," said Bishop, following the press conference. "If passed, it would end greyhound racing in the state of Florida. It would cost 3,000 Florida families their jobs, and it would create 13 casinos across the state without voter approval. Pure and simple, the FGA opposes decoupling."

Instead, he says the type of legislation his group favors is a bill aimed at ensuring the safety of greyhounds. It's sponsored by Sen. Chris Smith (D-Fort Lauderdale) and Representative Kevin Rader (D-Delray Beach).

"The Florida Greyhound Protection Act would ask the tracks to make some simple changes: 1) improve the track service, 2) improve...add a guard on the lure, what used to be the rabbit that the dogs chase, and 3) insulate electric wires on the track, very simple changes, really no brainers that we support and would ask the tracks

to do this year," added Bishop.

So far, no decoupling legislation has been filed. The only greyhound-related measure that's passed its first Senate committee is Hollywood Democratic Senator Eleanor Sobel's bill, requiring injuries to racing greyhounds to be reported. It's named after Representative Matt Gaetz's mother.

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