



By **DAVID BEGNAUD** / CBS NEWS / February 12, 2016, 7:29 PM

# Florida's Greyhound racing may be headed for the finish line

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**HALLANDALE BEACH, Fla.** -- Greyhound racing has been in decline for decades. Florida is one of the last places where it's still hanging on. But the controversial sport could be nearing the end of its run there.

Peter Cyers has been taking his daughter and his grandchildren to the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound racing track for 20 years.



Nearly empty stands at the Naples-Fort Myers Greyhound racing track / CBS NEWS

But recently, the grandstands have been nearly empty.

"I've seen a big decline in attendance. I remember crowds really cheering," Cyers said.

Only 19 dog tracks remain in the U.S. Twelve of them are in Florida -- Isadore Havenick owns two of them.

"To have 50 people come to a business that seats thousands, it's like going to a Dolphins game in December. It's an empty building."

Havenick says he loses \$5 million dollars a year running Greyhound races, but he has to in order to keep his more profitable poker business open. Florida law mandates it.

"We have to run 90 percent of the amount of racing we ran in 1996 in order to keep our poker room open," Havenick explained. "So thousands of dog races a year," he continued.

Havenick supports "decoupling" the two businesses, so he could run his poker rooms without racing the dogs.

Carey Theil is executive director of **Grey2K**, an organization working to protect Greyhounds.



A racing Greyhound is walked on a track / **CBS NEWS**

"Greyhound racing is cruel and inhumane. These dogs live in small cages for about 22 hours a day. The cages are barely large enough to stand up or turn around."

"If they don't want to run live Greyhound racing, they could stop today. Stop today, turn in your permit," said Jack Cory, who lobbies for the Greyhound industry.

He insists the dogs are well cared for. He blames the audience decline on track owners.

"Greyhound racing is alive and well if the tracks wanted to promote it. If the tracks wanted to monetize it. Mr. Theil and the animals rights groups, and the Greyhound tracks, all want to become slot casinos," Cory said.

The future of Florida's racing Greyhounds is buried in a gambling bill that legislature will be voting on later this month.