



Greyhound rescue fears Kansas bill may bring back dog racing to metro

POSTED: 11:21 AM, Feb 19, 2017

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TOPEKA, Kan. - A Kansas House bill has resurfaced that some fear will bring back dog racing to the metro.

While Kansas is one of a small handful of states where dog racing is still legal, no tracks are currently in operation. All of them closed because they weren't making money, one of them being The Woodlands, the Wyandotte County track which closed in 2008.

Race tracks used to pay twice the amount of taxes to the state than casinos, which may have been the main culprit to their failure. According to proponents of the bill, lawmakers simply want to level the playing field.

"Casinos right now only pay 22 percent to the state and a race track, for those allowable, would have to pay 44. What the bill does is change theirs to 22 as well," said Rep. Ron Highland (R-District 51), Vice Chair of committee sponsoring HB 2173.

REGAP (Retired Greyhounds As Pets) is a Kanas City non-profit strongly opposing the bill.

"If Kansas is trying to generate money I think it's a cause that was lost years ago," said Cher Oliver, a REGAP volunteer who has rescued greyhounds. "Once animals get into anything where they are a for-profit, they're the losers, always."

REGAP has rescued roughly 5,000 greyhounds from racetracks and breeders across the Midwest for more than 20 years.

Oliver says thousands of greyhounds are injured or killed each year because of the racing business, either because of poor track conditions or because of over-breeding.

"They can either die racing or end up with disabilities that make them disposable," she said. "These guys are coming from living in a box 24 hours a day with the exception of the little bit of exercise or their racing."

The non-profit is concerned that if the bill passes, Kansas race tracks which have the ability to race greyhounds will re-open.

"Then when they close yet again, because they aren't making money ... it's everyone scurrying to place as many as they possibly can so they're not destroyed," said Oliver.

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Proponents of HB 2173 include Las Vegas billionaire Phil Ruffin, who bought The Woodlands last year [before announcing a \\$50 million investment to renovate and re-open the Wyandotte County track.](#)

The Woodlands announced they plan to only race horses if they re-open. However, there are still many obstacles, even if HB 2173 passes.

"The big threat is that those that already have contracts will sue because in their opinion it changes the original agreement," said Highland during a phone interview with 41 Action News on Saturday. Highland says the bill is currently in the Appropriations Committee and is being reviewed by the attorney general to determine which liabilities lie with passing such a law.

But the same proponents with The Woodlands are going to great lengths to try to ensure their business endeavor is successful.

"One of the individuals that wants to open Woodlands says he will put up one hundred million dollars bond to cover any legal expenses that incur," said Highland.

For those interested in learning more about rescuing greyhounds, you can visit KCREGAP.org.

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