



## West Virginia Senate looking at ending greyhound racing subsidies

by CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS  
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CHARLESTON, WV (WCHS/WVAH) – There are two greyhound race tracks in West Virginia -- one at the Mardi Gras Casino in Cross Lanes, the other on Wheeling Island, in Wheeling. Both tracks are given subsidies from the state for breeding and purse money.

"In this difficult budget climate, does it make sense to continue to subsidize an industry that's causing so many dogs to suffer serious injuries?" said Carey Theil, the executive director of Grey 2K USA.

Grey 2K USA is national organization working to pass greyhound protection laws. Theil said in 2016 almost 500 greyhounds were injured in West Virginia -- 16 of those died.

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"An industry that is only here because it's being subsidized with money that could instead be used for public safety, for education, for health care," Theil said.

Alan Pritt, a lobbyist for the West Virginia Kennel Association, said the money greyhound racing is getting from the state is not a subsidy. Pritt said no taxpayer dollars are spent on greyhound racing. Pritt said money spent while people are gambling goes into a fund, and that is the money used for greyhound racing.

"The state wants to take that money and send it to general revenue," Pritt said.

Pritt said these dogs are not treated badly by trainers. He said these dogs are athletes and get the best care they possibly can. Pritt said like with any athlete there are going to be injuries, but said when that happens, the dogs get medical attention.

"To say that these dogs are being abused, these dogs aren't being cared for, it's just simply not true," Pritt said.

Greyhound racing subsidies are on the table again as West Virginia government struggles to balance the budget. By law, state casinos must have live racing to stay open. The bill under consideration in the Senate would end that law and allow casinos to operate with slots and casino games. Theil and Pritt are both scheduled to speak when the Senate Finance Committee takes up the measure at 3 p.m. Tuesday.



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