

Straus Confidant Faces Dog Abuse Questions



Mar 23,
2015
by

**Tony
McDonald**



Greyhound 2k, a Boston-based advocate for the welfare of Greyhounds has lodged complaints against Gulf Greyhound Park related to the abuse of dogs at the track. The track **is owned in part by Robert and Gordon Johnson**, two longtime Austin lobbyists for gambling interests. Gordon Johnson serves as the campaign consultant and chief political advisor to Texas House Speaker Joe Straus.

In a March 9, 2015 letter to Chuck Trout, Executive Director of the Texas Racing Commission, Christine Dorchak, the President and General Counsel of **Greyhound 2k called on the Commission to investigate** a number of abuses that were brought to the group's attention by an anonymous whistleblower familiar with the track.

The **whistleblower alleges a number of conditions** causing great harm to the greyhounds, including:

- "The slowest opening box in operation anywhere in the industry" which "causes the greyhounds to crash into the doors, causing cuts and head and neck injuries" and results "in the greyhounds' muzzles getting caught on internal parts of the box."
- "Low, full width windows in the front of the [starting] box" of a type "used nowhere else in the country," which "cause the greyhounds to collide and trip over each other immediately after opening."
- A racing surface that "is the worst [the whistleblower] has ever seen,"

including “wet spots and dry spots the dogs must run through” and “lateral and perpendicular ridges in the surface” resulting from poor surface maintenance which cause “injured muscles, torn ligaments, and broken legs.”

The whistleblower further alleges that the track’s problems can and should be corrected but, thus far, the owners of the track “have refused time and time again to spend the time and money it would take to correct the problems.” The whistleblower also alleges that the owners have been “given recommendations and instructions by industry experts on the proper care and operation of a safe racing facility,” yet “they refuse to do what everyone knows should be done.”

Greyhound racing parks are widely condemned for abusing dogs. Critics note that the animals are often simply disposed of when they cease to be useful for racing.

“They would rather chew up dogs than spend the money necessary to make Gulf Greyhound Park as safe for the dogs as possible,” alleges the whistleblower. “They have made a conscious decision that the racing greyhounds are ‘expendable’.”

The whistleblower closed his letter to Greyhound2k, commenting: “I am tormented by seeing these dogs suffer and die for no other reason than to make a few people richer.”

Records indicate that **approximately 750 dogs have suffered fractured legs and other bones** at Gulf Greyhound since 2009. In 2014 the track was **briefly closed** following a surge of injuries.

Greyhound racing has been in decline for over 20 years. In 2014 alone, Gulf Greyhound saw **another 15% decline in attendance**. Track owners like Gordon and Robert Johnson are widely seen as squatting on the racetracks they own in hopes of legalizing the installation of slot machines or slot machine substitutes at the tracks. The legalization of the machines would reward the owners for their investment – including an investment of the lives of abused animals.

It is unclear whether Trout or the Commission will take the complaints about Gulf Greyhound seriously and investigate. House Speaker Joe Straus should be challenged on whether he condones animal abuse in the gambling industry, and whether he will hold his consultant responsible for his track’s abusive practices.