

# Charleston Daily Mail

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September 29, 2011

## Greyhound industry donating to Tomblin

by Ry Rivard  
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CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Acting Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin may be trying to distance himself from his family's greyhound breeding and racing business, but backing from the greyhound industry might not be doing much to help.

Campaign finance records show that greyhound breeders are donating money to the Tomblin campaign. Breeders stand to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars in state money each year if Republican Bill Maloney is elected and keeps his campaign promise to end the subsidies.

Tomblin's mother and brother breed and race the dogs. They have also received a few million dollars in state subsidies to do so since the early 1990s.

A chief concern of the Maloney campaign has been Earl Ray Tomblin's ties to that family business, of which Tomblin has said he has no part.

Still, that doesn't mean the industry doesn't support Tomblin's candidacy.

Carey Theil, executive director of Grey2K USA, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit working to outlaw greyhound racing, drew attention to contributions the industry has given to Tomblin in an email sent Wednesday to the media.

According to Theil:

\* The owner of McMillon Kennel, which received \$459,000 in greyhound subsidies in 2010, gave \$1,000 to the Tomblin campaign. The kennel is the second largest recipient of greyhound subsidies in West Virginia.

\* The third largest recipient of subsidies, Ricardo Pacheco, gave Tomblin \$250. Pacheco received \$324,000 in subsidies.

\* The fifth largest recipient of greyhound subsidies, Harvey Maupin Jr., gave the maximum \$1,000 to the Tomblin campaign, as did his wife. In 2010, Maupin received \$249,000 in subsidies.

\* The seventh largest recipient of greyhound subsidies, Rondis Cavender, gave \$500 to the Tomblin campaign. In 2010, Cavender received \$237,000 in subsidies.

The Tomblin Family Kennel, owned by Tomblin's mother, received \$268,000 in subsidies in 2010, according to a tally provided by Theil.

All told, the state provided about \$5 million to subsidize the greyhound industry in 2010. Money is awarded based on the performance of dogs and the money used comes from gambling proceeds received by the state.

Some of the figures Theil cites could not be independently confirmed Wednesday evening.

A Tomblin campaign spokesman did not reply to an email seeking comment.

Theil has previously endorsed Maloney's candidacy because it could lead to the end of the subsidies.

But Maloney's spotlighting of the greyhound fund is clearly political. For instance, he has not said he would eliminate a similar fund for horse racing. While the greyhound fund costs about \$5 million a year, the fund for horses is about \$8 million a year, according to state records.

While Tomblin did vote for legislation that helped establish the funds, there was broad support for the funds in the Legislature.

A spokesman for the greyhound industry defended Tomblin in a letter published Wednesday in the Daily Mail. In the letter, West Virginia Greyhound Owners and Breeders Association President Sam Burdette noted that Earl Ray Tomblin doesn't have much, if anything, to do with his family's business.

"We have been to the Tomblins' farm and have never seen Earl Ray," Burdette wrote. "...From our knowledge and observation, Earl Ray keeps an arm's length from the greyhound business. It is absolute nonsense to assert that his family received \$2 to \$3 million because of his actions."

Maloney's attacks on Tomblin have often centered on the state money his family has received. But his claims -- and similar ones made in other anti-Tomblin ads aired by a Republican group -- can be misleading.

For instance, one ad said Tomblin had once voted "to direct" the money to his family business as a member of the Legislature. While Tomblin did vote for the bill that set up the fund, the money is distributed based on the performance of the dogs and is not something Tomblin directly controls.

However, Maloney's campaign attempted to undermine Tomblin's attempts to distance himself from the family business. A "special report" released by the Maloney campaign last week revealed that checks for the subsidies go to a post office box Earl Ray Tomblin also uses.

"My parents have their businesses and they make their living and I can't tell what they do, and I do what I do," Tomblin told the Daily Mail last week.

Tomblin said he has received mail at the post office box since he was in high school. Tomblin said he doesn't check the mail there now.

Earlier this year, Grey2K helped bring attention to the number of racing dogs injured over the past six years at Mardi Gras racetrack.

More than 3,200 injuries were reported at the Nitro track from the beginning of 2005 to the end of 2010, an average of about 1.4 injuries per day, records filed with the West Virginia Racing Commission show.

At least 152 dogs suffered injuries that were so severe they had to be euthanized. At least seven died as a result of illnesses contracted in the kennels.

More than 700 injuries were reported between January 2008 and September 2009 at Wheeling Island, West Virginia's other dog track.

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