



March 31, 2015

Dear Senator,

Legislation, S.B. 352, was recently introduced in the Senate to implement reforms to Pennsylvania's Race Horse Industry Reform Act. While the Pennsylvania Equine Coalition supports the majority of the provisions which provide a much needed update to the Act, we continue to have serious concerns about a provision of the bill that would place oversight of both the Standardbred and Thoroughbred racing industries under a single racing commission.

The Pennsylvania legislature intentionally established two distinct racing commissions for Standardbred and thoroughbred racing. This was because the legislature recognized the substantial distinctions in the two forms of racing and differences in the breeds. Having two distinct commissions – with separate regulations because of the variations in the breeds and forms of racing – has served Pennsylvania and the racing industry well for many decades.

These variations between Thoroughbred and Standardbred racing includes:

- vastly different general rules of racing and regulations between the two breeds and forms of racing;
- different track design, material construction, and maintenance requirements;
- differences in racing schedules and the length time between starts of individual horses, which impacts medication usage and administration issues;
- differences in the equipment for the horse in training and racing;
- differences in two-year old horses and their respective racing schedules and medication levels;
- differences in paddock procedures;
- differences in Race Day warm-ups, medication administration, and detention
- a Pennsylvania Fair racing program that is unique to harness racing
- vastly different testing procedure times for blood gas analysis – in Standardbreds the testing is performed before the race and in thoroughbred after the race which has resulted in substantial differences in the existing regulatory framework;
- differences in purse distributions, including the percentages of purse distribution to race participants and horses that receive purse awards based upon their placement in a race;
- differences in breeders awards and sire stakes programs; and
- numerous other distinctions that have been addressed under the existing two commission structure.

Placing the two breeds under the oversight of a single entity represents a one size fits all approach that would be extremely detrimental to the industry. It would also create a great deal of uncertainty about the regulatory environment within the industry and among existing participants in Pennsylvania racing. This has the potential to impact decisions by horse trainers and owners to race their horses in Pennsylvania compared to other states and may impede our ability to field enough horses in some races.

However, we do support reforms to the existing two commission structure. In its current form, the two commissions each have three commissioners appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Equine Coalition supports the expansion of the number of commissioners from three to five individuals while allowing for industry representation on the commissions. Under current law, commissioners are prohibited from being an active race horse owner or breeder, which greatly impacts the knowledge base of commissioners and their familiarity with the industry. Obviously, these individuals would be required to recuse themselves should any conflicts arise.

We recognize that the Senate Agriculture Committee has invested significant time and effort into crafting this legislation and we greatly appreciate the willingness of members of the committee and their staff to make a variety of amendments to the legislation since its initial draft that have greatly improved the bill and its legislative intent. Maintaining the independent commissions, separate and distinct from the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board, is a significant and necessary provision needed to ensure the long-term success of the Commonwealth's racing industry.

We want to reiterate that the Pennsylvania Equine Coalition – which represents more than 10,000 horse owners, trainers, and breeders in the state's equine industry -- supports efforts to implement common-sense reforms, increase transparency, and update the Race Horse Industry Reform Act. However, we continue to maintain serious concerns about combining the two commissions under a single regulatory structure.

We are hopeful that we can continue to work with members of the Senate to address these concerns.

Sincerely,

The Pennsylvania Equine Coalition

Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen's Association

The Pennsylvania Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association

The Standardbred Breeders Association of Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association

The Meadows Standardbred Owners Association

The Pennsylvania Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association