

Jan 30th, 2012

TO: Federal and State Affairs Committee
RE: Support of **SB 319**
FROM: Rita Osborn

Chairman Brungardt and Committee Members:

I am Rita Osborn from Eureka, KS. I am currently a special education teacher at Eureka Jr. Sr. High School, coach, and President of the Kansas Quarter Horse Racing Association.

As an educator, we teach historical information to our students, focusing on the state and community they live in.

*Take a minute and think about **history** in our state.

So what am I doing here? I'm here to ask your support to do what is right for Kansas: to allow the horse and greyhound racing industry to be a part of the agricultural economy while bringing investment and jobs back to the state of Kansas. After all, it is history.

Each year, while racing, Eureka Downs provided part-time employment for many individuals during the race meet. The total amount of racetrack expenditures, which does not include any of the expenses related to the care and handling of the horses, is a very sizeable amount. A majority of these dollars are spent in Greenwood County. While racing in Eureka, the city received \$400 more in bed tax, \$2,000 in sales tax and \$300 in Liquor tax, and this is for May, June and July in 2008.

Just to recap a little history:

The pari-mutuel gambling system has been around since 1875.

Beginning in 1872, a trotter race was held at Eureka Downs, offering organized racing and began attracting breeders, trainers and fans that all added to the economic impact to the state.

In 1986

*** the Kansas voters approved pari-mutual horse and greyhound racing wagering at approved tracks in the state, knowing the importance of the economic impact. The Woodlands in Kansas City opened up. A year later, they were granted 72 days of prime live horse racing.

In 1989

***Wichita Greyhound Park was opened, adding another important venue for greyhounds.

Then came the lottery

****Tribal gaming and Missouri riverboats moved in and the tracks were no longer the only place to make a bet. Then the shift to casino style gambling came and the revenue source for racing has taken a hit.

Since 1996

****Horseman to you explaining the demise of our industry, asking that expanded gaming be allowed to contribute to the agri-business of Kansas by adding slot machines at the tracks. We got close several times, but never succeeded.

Sn Fed & State
Attachment 15

1-31-12

Kansas has already made the decision to allow expanded gaming in the state.

Unfortunately, current law and tough economy has left our horse and greyhound tracks without the financial ability to operate under the current law.

In 2007

** a law was passed, , , , , , but would not financially work for the race track owners.

With the racing facilities open in Kansas, it would allow a place for all levels of horses or dogs to compete. With more places to race, this in turn sparks and stimulates all aspects of agri-business in the state. People are raising more horses, employing more people, allowing another family entertainment venue, and bringing money into the state, and helping a low-socioeconomic county survive. Not to mention again, the history that is brought back to life.

Some of you know first hand what happens to a larger community when a big industry is shut down. Think about what happens in the rural area when you shut down a source of jobs and revenue.

So what is happening to the industry? Horses are leaving the state to compete, individuals are being attracted to out-of-state entertainment, horse related businesses are seeing a decline in the dollar, and the agriculture industry is on the decline.

By fixing the law, and opening up the tracks, not only will it rejuvenate the City of Eureka, it will also spark more interest in horse owners. This fix will help spur the economic growth needed for rural areas and communities especially Eureka and the agriculture areas of the state.

It isn't about gambling – whether you are for it or against it. It is about fixing the law, and it is a simple fix. Please support SB 319 with your vote.

Think about the fun you can have on \$2. Would you rather scratch away at a piece of cardboard in hope that you'll reveal three horseshoes in a row, OR you could bet on a the fastest athlete in the world, or massive animals blazing around a oval at 45 mph. It's up to you now.

****decline of 13-20 students per year in the Eureka School district

***closing of the IBP/Tyson plant in Emporia

***decrease of aviation jobs in the Wichita area

*****Eureka Downs was a tourist attraction – during the summer month

While casino gaming creates jobs within a few miles of the gaming facility, the enhanced purses and expansion of the horse and greyhound industry by reopening the racetracks will create jobs hundreds of miles away from the facility, with most of these jobs being in rural communities all over Kansas.