

**TESTIMONY OF STEVE WARD ON BEHALF OF THE KANSAS GREYHOUND
ASSOCIATION
March 22, 2013**

Dear Members of the Committee:

I am Steve Ward, President of the Kansas Greyhound Association and am appearing today on behalf of such.

I am a greyhound owner and former kennel operator in the state of Kansas. My wife Edie and I have operated a farm in Ellis, Kansas for over 30 years and I also operated at a kennel at the Woodlands in Kansas City before it was closed.

In 2003, I was elected as president of the Kansas Greyhound Association. It was at this time, the board of directors became increasingly active in the legislative process with the purpose of bringing VLT's to the existing pari-mutuel facilities throughout the state. Through tireless efforts of many involved in the greyhound, horse and track businesses, this feat was accomplished with the passage of SB66 in 2007.

However, SB 66 turned out to be flawed. Economic conditions – an unusually high state tax rate and the failure of the vote in Sedgwick County, caused our two existing racetracks to close their doors. At a time when we thought we would join 11 other states in using slot machines at racetracks to generate new state revenues while growing agricultural elements of our business – we ended up with nothing.

This has proven to be a devastating consequence not only for the breed groups but for various vendors that serviced these industries. These closures were responsible for the immediate loss of 3000 jobs and at least 1500 more secondary jobs. Those jobs losses affect more than just the track locations. Communities all across the Kansas were affected including mine but probably none as much as Abilene.

Following the passage of SB66, the KGA immediately formed a work group that would track the increased purses that were expected to come to the greyhound industry. The purpose of this group was to maximize the purses so that the industry would continue to grow and prosper, bring in new investors and continue to increase the value of a Kansas-Bred animal.

For years, the industry has known that the best greyhounds in the country were raised in Kansas and specifically most of those in Abilene and the surrounding area. However, dogs that were not as fast but were Iowa-Bred, West Virginia-Bred or Arkansas-Bred continued to sell for higher prices than Kansas greyhounds because of purses enhanced by slot machine revenues available to those other states.

We have the ability to reopen four pari-mutuel racetrack facilities, including two that offer live greyhound racing. Reopening these tracks means significant new revenues for the state.

I want to address the impact on rural communities, through the expansion of the Horse and Greyhound Industry.

There would be a significant and immediate impact across the state with the reopening of those four facilities. First, it takes roughly 18 months from birth for a greyhound to make it to the racetrack so breeders would immediately increase their breeding program in the state of Kansas as well as start registering their animals as Kansas-Bred. This would not only have an impact on the state level but the national level as well.

There are currently no kennel operators actually operating in this state, because all tracks are closed. With the reopening of the racetracks, there would be an immediate opening for approximately 24 kennel operators (14 at Wichita and 12 at Pittsburg). One kennel operation is the equivalent of a million dollar business in the local community.

The breeders and kennel operators in the state have already proven that they are willing to invest in their future and the viability of the industry. Following the passage of SB66 in 2007, the number of Kansas-Bred greyhounds increased significantly.

The media has focused on jobs, jobs and more jobs. The fact is with the reopening of these 4 facilities, there will be over 4000 new jobs. Those opportunities would come about from the increased need on the farms and kennel operations directly throughout Kansas. Then, of course, vendors servicing the various facilities and operations would have to increase their staffs.

It is important for the KGA as well as the communities directly affected by the breed groups, that the pari-mutuel industry be restored in the state. It will increase revenues to the greyhound breeders in Kansas who breed, raise and train these animals. Money now being spent out of state will be reinvested in local Kansas communities, not only benefiting the communities, but the economy of the entire state. This has to happen in Kansas so that the state world-famous for its greyhounds also becomes world-famous for its purses.

Thank you for the opportunity of appearing before the Committee. I will be happy to respond to questions.

