

Testimony before the Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee
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In-Person testimony opposed to SB404

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Chairman Olson and members of the committee; thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Jim Gartland. Currently, I am the Executive Director of the National Greyhound Association, headquartered in Abilene, KS, and have served in that capacity for the past six years. Abilene, KS is known as the "Capitol" of greyhound racing and is home to the Greyhound Hall of Fame.

Despite what you may have been told, the greyhound racing industry is seeing a huge uptick in betting as evidenced by recent wagering figures out of West Virginia where the two tracks there showed a 187% increase in wagering in 2021 as compared to the last full year of racing in 2019. 187%! In fact, while soundly defeating similar legislation two years ago, West Virginia lawmakers not only saw past the animal rights agenda, but in debate, encouraged support and expansion of greyhound racing based on the potential for growth they saw, and now that state is reaping those benefits.

Greyhounds and greyhound farms have been a part of the fabric of the Kansas agriculture community for many, many years and it would be shame to have that taken away based on the baseless concerns of animal rights activists and greedy track operators.

With all that as background, I strongly oppose SB404. I certainly do not want to see greyhound racing eliminated, or should I say discriminated against, as is the case with this bill. This action will no doubt open the door for legal challenges down the road and I hope the Senate would not endorse such action. It was made abundantly clear in SB66 as to what conditions the owners of the tracks would be allowed to operate under. In what universe does a business owner get to circumvent and gut current laws and regulations in order to tailor them solely to suit their needs, while completely disenfranchising other included parties? Why should one entity be allowed to decide the fate of an entire state's industry based on their specific desires for one location?

The answer to both questions is..... they should not. I also find it quite ironic that the same group looking to eliminate greyhound racing in this bill, offers wagering on greyhounds at other properties they own around the country. This bill would even exclude the NGA from any possibility of holding a fair meet or other pari-mutuel activity. We certainly were not consulted, let alone notified of OUR OWN exclusion.

This bill is offensive and disrespectful to the entire greyhound community. If Phil Ruffin doesn't want to offer greyhound races to run his "historic horse racing" machines, so be it, but why allow him to prohibit anyone else from doing so? This is akin to letting McDonalds write the laws on what fast food franchises are allowed to be operated in the state.

We're dealing here with a sport that goes back a hundred years and is enjoyed by many, not to mention the proud Kansas-specific heritage of greyhound breeding and farming.

People like Phil Ruffin, animal rights activists and the like play to lawmakers sympathies and emotions rather than their intellect.

Once again, I thank you for your time and stand for any questions you may have.