

Gaetz looks to end 'barbaric' greyhound races

By TOM McLAUGHLIN | Daily News

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State Rep. Matt Gaetz will be among the leaders of a bi-partisan group of lawmakers determined to send greyhound racing into oblivion this legislative session.

"I am convinced we will sometime soon see the end of greyhound racing, a barbaric practice that has no place in our society," said Gaetz, R-Fort Walton Beach.

The conservative Gaetz joined Jared Moskowitz, a Coral Gables Democrat he called "liberal," at a Thursday news conference.



The lawmakers discussed plans to introduce legislation that will make the racing industry more accountable by forcing greyhound tracks to report injuries to dogs.

They also plan to reintroduce a bill that would release track owners from the obligation of running a certain number of races each year to keep poker rooms and other amenities at their facilities open.

It is anticipated this "decoupling" will encourage many greyhound tracks to get out of the business of racing, which has been steadily losing money for years.

While both measures failed last year, Carey Theil, executive director of Grey2K USA, said he's seeing wider support than he ever has in Florida for legislation to protect greyhounds.

"We're closer to getting something passed than ever," Theil said. "Whether we get decoupling and injury reporting passed, or just injury reporting passed and decoupling later I don't know, but I feel convinced something will get to the governor."

Gaetz said he remains wary of big gambling, and efforts to squeeze that lobby's interests into legislation designed to protect animals.

"I never underestimate the power of the gambling interests that attempt to append gambling expansion into greyhound welfare legislation," he said.

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