

Report on greyhound racing deaths has lawmakers on edge

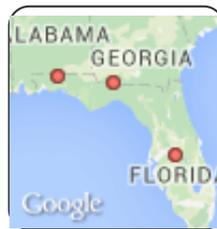
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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- The startling report documenting hundreds of greyhound deaths at racing tracks over the last few years has sparked much reaction among Tallahassee lawmakers. Thursday, the group behind the report held a press conference in hopes of gaining support for laws that would end dog racing.



Greyhound Racing

Where's the story?



3 Points Mentioned

"For the first time we can see the full scope of the suffering that greyhounds endure," said Carey Theil, executive director and spokesperson for Grey2K USA. His organization released the first comprehensive report on the greyhound racing industry, which documented nearly 12,000 greyhound injuries and more than 900 deaths over the last 7 years.

"This is cruelty on a large scale and it needs to end," he says. "I would just say that it's time to look forward rather than subsidize a 20th century relic that is losing money and harms dogs," added

Theil.

Theil says that, according to state filings, all of the dog tracks in [Florida](#) are losing money on the racing -- but state law says that in order for those tracks to remain offering other types of gambling, like slot machines and poker rooms, they have to continue to operate the dog racing business.

"Collectively they are losing more than \$40 million a year, and they're really only continuing to operate because they have other forms of gambling, like poker," said Theil. "And the law right now says that for them to make money on poker, they have to lose money on greyhound racing, and that obviously makes no sense."

Many lawmakers agree, holding a press conference to urge support for a decoupling bill that would separate the greyhound racing requirement needed to have card games and other gambling rooms.

"This is not just a practice that is mean to animals. it is a practice that erodes our collective humanity. I look forward to the day when [Florida](#) can distance ourselves from the troubled past of being the place where this industry was born in the country, to being the place where the industry dies," said State Rep. Matt Gaetz, a republican from [Okaloosa County](#)).

In the meantime, dog racing supporters say the focus needs to be on track safety and required injury reporting. Supporters also point out, if tracks were allowed to stop running dogs, many people in the industry would be out of work.

"Let's make no mistake about it; if passed, it would end greyhound racing in the state of [Florida](#). it would cost 3000 Florida families their jobs, and it would create 13 casinos across the state without voter approval," said David Bishop from the Florida Greyhound Association.