

# Fight to End Greyhound Racing in Florida is Back On

By Chris Joseph

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After falling [painfully short of passing a bill](#) that would have ended greyhound decoupling in Florida last year, advocates for the racing dogs have come back for another round, this time armed with a new study that reminds everyone of the cruelty these animals endure when forced to race.

Grey2K USA along with The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) (ASPCA) released the first-ever national report on greyhound racing in the U.S.

Florida remains one of seven states that still has greyhound racing, including Broward County's Mardi Gras Casino. Florida law states that gambling is allowed only at facilities that offer racing. So tracks keep greyhound racing so they can offer lucrative slots and poker, even though the tracks lose money on dog racing, and injuries are common. Decoupling would allow gambling without the dog races.

See also: [Florida Greyhound Deaths: 131 Dogs Killed Last Year at State Tracks](#)

The report, titled "High Stakes" details the thousands of cases of greyhound injuries and deaths throughout the seven states that continue to run races.

The new report comes with a renewed focus to get decoupling passed in Florida. A decoupling bill was close to passing last year, but at the last minute a rules challenge by Sen. Jack Latvala killed the bill, even though [it had the 12-6 votes to pass](#). The decoupling amendment was shut down over a technicality in the language in the bill, and the push to end decoupling ended in the last session.

But on Thursday, Grey2K along with Coral Springs Rep. Jared Moskowitz met with lawmakers in Tallahassee to discuss the new study and a new plan to draw up another bill.

"Florida is the largest of the seven states that still has greyhound racing," Moskowitz tells *New Times*. "That's sixty percent of the races nationwide. And what we've learned is that from May through December of last year, 75 dogs died racing in Florida."

As Moskowitz puts it, basically in most cases, the greyhounds are running for their life during these races.

"I think this is a renewed push with new information," Carey Theil, executive director of Grey2K USA, tells *New Times*. "We know more about greyhound racing than before. This new report will set the stage for another strong push to push new legislation."

The 80-page report culls together data from nearly 600 sources studied between 2008 and 2014. Among the findings in the study reveal that there have been 11,722 recorded greyhound injuries, many that include broken legs and other injuries such as crushed skulls, broken backs, paralysis and electrocutions. More than 900 deaths have been chronicled, some who died of starvation and lack of veterinary care. There is also data showing that sixteen greyhounds tested positive for cocaine.

Florida has seen its fair share of disasters, including one trainer at Mardi Gras Racetrack who [falsified vaccination papers for 94 of his greyhounds](#) by forging a dead veterinarian's signature on the documents.

On Thursday Moskowitz, along with Rep. Matt Gaetz and Rep. John Wood, met in Tallahassee to discuss the greyhound study as well as look into the matter of pushing through two bills. Moskowitz is also co-sponsoring a bill with Sen. Eleanor Sobel that would require dog owners and track veterinarians to report injuries within seven days. Tracks who don't comply would lose their license.

"An injury bill would, at the very least, give us more information on the extent of injuries throughout the year," Moskowitz says.

It would be a good start, but decoupling would make it so casinos and race tracks could stop racing altogether.

"In this industry, the government is mandating how business is run," Moskowitz says. "The government is still operating under the rules set in 1977, when greyhound racing was first introduced here. Decoupling won't ban greyhound racing. But it'll at least give casino owners the choice on whether to have racing or not."

"Decoupling is straight forward policy," Theil says, when asked about last year's failure to get legislature passed. "Getting the language right would require work because the gambling laws in Florida are old and outdated. But I'd say we're a slight favorite this year."

The hope now is that Moskowitz and other lawmakers will get decoupling pushed through along with injury-reporting.

"I'm optimistic this is our year," Theil says. "I really am."

"This is going to happen," Moskowitz adds. "I'm cautiously optimistic. Nothing has happened yet, but no idea is dead until the last day of any legislative session."

[High Stakes.pdf](#) by [Chris Joseph](#)