



## Greyhound racing in Lee Co. may end with new law

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LEE COUNTY - A new gambling deal could be the end of the road for greyhound racing in Lee County.

Lawmakers and gambling leaders are hashing out legislation that could do away with live racing altogether. The matter will be looked at next session, which begins in January of 2016.

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Greyhound racing used to be a huge draw in Florida. But since 2006, the amount gambled on live racing at dog tracks in the Sunshine State has dropped 50-percent prompting many tracks to consider reducing or eliminating the controversial races altogether.

As it stands now, venues like the Naples/Fort Myers Greyhound Track can only hold poker and other card games as long as they also have greyhound racing due to a law that has been in place since 1996.

That law will go away if officials agree to an issue known as decoupling.

The vice president of political affairs for the Magic City Casinos, Izzy Havenick, sees this as a win for both sides.

"The state of Florida loses millions of dollars by regulating dog racing and tracks are forced to lose millions of dollars," said Havenick.

According to al-Jazeera, the Naples/Fort Myers track loses \$2.5 million on racing each year.

Decoupling would allow tracks full control over whether they allow live racing; a move that greyhound advocates said is a step in the right direction.

"Decoupling would be great for the animal advocates and for the track proponents," said Chuck Danielian of Grey2K USA.

Under Florida law, individual tracks are forced by the state to run 408 performances with eight races per performance every year.

"If decoupling were to happen, we'd be able to determine how many performances we run at our facility based on market conditions," said Havenick.

While greyhound supporters are encouraged by the discussion, elimination of greyhound racing altogether is their ultimate goal.

"We don't think animals should be used for entertainment," said Danielian.

By 2016, only six states, including Florida, will allow greyhound racing.

Our local track is also fighting for the chance to introduce slots, which are already allowed in Dade and Broward counties.