

After death of gaming bill, House passes injury reporting at greyhound tracks

After rejecting legislation to require the greyhound racing industry to report animal injuries for the last four years, the Florida House approved an amendment Friday that requires track owners to disclose dog deaths, and is poised to pass the measure last week.

The bill is a concession to animal rights advocates, who have fought for the measure that has passed the Senate unanimously in the last two years, but has been entangled in pari-mutuel industry politics in the House.

After the gaming bill was declared dead by House leaders this week, supporters of the measure pushed to the measure added to a routine regulatory bill, said Rep. **Jared Moskowitz**, D-Coral Springs, the sponsor of the the amendment to HB 1167 (<http://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=673727.docx&DocumentType=Amendments&BillNumber=1187&Session=2016>).

Under the amendment, any injury to a racing greyhound in Florida must be reported to the Division of Pari-mutuel Wagering within 7 days.

"This would be the first significant piece of greyhound protection legislation to ever pass the Florida legislature," said **Carey M. Theil**, executive Director of GREY2K USA Worldwide (<http://www.grey2kusa.org/>), which advocates for an end to dog racing. "We're hopeful lawmakers will send this good bill to the governor in the coming days."

Unlike other states, Florida's greyhound industry does not have to report when dogs are injured as a result of racing or training. The measure imposes fines on track veterinarians who fail to report race-related injuries and follows a similar bill passed in 2013 that requires tracks to report greyhound deaths.

Under the current law, the reports show that 79 greyhounds died in 2013, 113 in 2014 and 93 in 2015 -- an average of one every three days due to race-related causes.

If a greyhound dies on the racetrack, it has to be reported, but if the death occurs outside the track and they euthanize the dog somewhere else, they don't have to report it as a race-related death.

The requirement to report all injuries, "closes that loophole," Moskowitz said. "If the greyhound dies in a car or at the vet, it should be reported."

He suggested that dog trainers and owners don't want to report the deaths because if the reporting shows there are hundreds more deaths than previously known, it might increase the public opposition to racing.

Moskowitz said that when an injury reporting requirement was passed in Massachusetts, deaths to racing dogs declined by 40 percent in the first year, he said, because "it's less expensive to euthanize dogs than it is to fix a broken leg and they don't want you to know they are euthanizing the dogs."

In the last two years, the Senate named its bill after **Vicky Gaetz**, the wife of former Senate President **Don Gaetz**, R-Niceville, who is an animal lover and who worked to help persuade lawmakers to pass the death reporting bill

The Florida Greyhound Association, which represents owners, trainers and breeders, has opposed injury reporting without passing additional requirements to keep dogs safe, suggesting that instead it is a public relations effort by the animal activists aimed to end dog racing. The organization has repeatedly pushed for a three-pronged plan to require tracks to end practices that cause most dog injuries -- poorly maintained track surfaces, electrocution caused by non-insulated electrical lines carrying the "lure," and lures that injure dogs.

"If they really wanted to help dogs, they'd try to prevent injuries," said **Ramon Maury**, lobbyist for the greyhound association. "But they don't care about dogs. They want to use the strategy against us."