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N4T Investigators: Time to end dog track tax break?

TUCSON - Tucson Greyhound Park continues to draw flies in the stands, but that doesn't have a major impact on its bottom line. TGP makes most of its money from simulcasting- and from a big tax break- courtesy of your state lawmakers and some lobbyists. According to the Arizona Department of Racing's annual report for fiscal year 2013, the state gave TGP a tax credit last year of \$321,791.

State Rep. Bruce Wheeler (D-Tucson) says it's about time for lawmakers to consider ending the tax credit.

Wheeler told the News 4 Tucson Investigators, "This is certainly something that has to be addressed next year. This is way too much money to subsidize on something like this. It's ridiculous. Look, we're closing schools, there was an attempt recently to close libraries, we're hurting with jobs, our roads have potholes in them. We need to use that money for issues that have much higher priority than subsidizing Greyhound racing."

Although Steve Kozachik is a Tucson councilman and the dog track is in South Tucson, he's been an outspoken, long-time critic of TGP.

"It's called a hardship tax credit and it's coming out of your pocket and mine," Kozachik said. "They ought to scrub those numbers out of the Department of Racing, put them back in the General Fund, and fund something that's meaningful."

The state legislature approved the tax credit for TGP and all the other racing facilities in the mid 90's, after Native American casinos started eating into profits at the tracks.

The News 4 Tucson Investigators called officials at Tucson Greyhound Park try to get their side of the tax break story. General Manager Dale Popp did not return our calls.

However, Public Relations Manager John C. Scott said we could come into the track and videotape from any common area. Apparently, Scott's boss was not on the same page.

Just as we entered the building, a man who declined to identify himself escorted us out.

Rep. Wheeler says although it's too late to introduce a bill during the current legislative session, he plans to discuss ending this tax break when lawmakers meet next year.

If you have a story you'd like us to investigate, email us at investigators@kvoa.com, or call our tip line, (520) 955-4444.