

Jared Moskowitz proving his mettle on greyhound decoupling

By **Peter Schorsch** - Apr 21, 2015



SaintPetersBlog previously **reported** on Rep. **Jared Moskowitz** as someone to watch this Legislative Session and he's proving us right. Moskowitz is quietly emerging this session as a power player in the Florida House of Representatives, despite the "D" next to his name.

Since joining the House in 2012, Moskowitz has been a champion of animal rights and his passion for that issue is having an outsize influence on the debate over gaming.

The single biggest animal rights issue in Tallahassee for the past several years has been the issue of greyhound racing. Florida law forces businesses into the barbaric practice of running greyhounds just to maintain a card room. Because of this state mandate, a racing greyhound dies every three days in the State of Florida.

Says Moskowitz of this policy, "The state-mandated policy on dog racing is a failed policy: the tracks are losing money, the state is losing money and the dogs are dying".

And Moskowitz is acting on his policy passion. Gaming legislation in Tallahassee often falls victim to what many call a "circular firing squad". However, with an all-star bipartisan team shepherding this issue, it has a fighting chance. Working closely with Finance and Tax Chair (and fellow animal advocate) **Matt Gaetz** and with Majority Leader **Dana Young**, Rep. Moskowitz has become *the* Democratic point man on *all* gaming issues.

Why is this important? Because the Democratic caucus in the House currently has 39 members – a superminority. If any gaming bill would come to the floor of the House, large swaths of the GOP majority are voting NO due to religious objections to gambling. Democratic votes are a *must* to pass any bill off the floor of House; gaming is the key for passing a bill and for Democrats relevance in the chamber.

Earlier this week, Reps. Moskowitz, **Jose Javier Rodriguez** and **Janet Cruz** organized the single largest meeting of gaming stakeholders in Florida history – both proponents and opponents. What ensued was a brief taste of Tallahassee power for Democrats in the House. After hearing the position of each and every stakeholder – from the greyhound breeders to the destination casinos – Moskowitz began to craft a pathway to moving this heavy legislation through the Florida House with the support of his Democratic colleagues. As a result, the road to passing a gaming bill goes directly through the Democratic caucus, with Moskowitz leading the charge.

Narrowly holding the votes in Regulatory Affairs and Finance and Tax, Moskowitz, along with allies Chair Gaetz and Leader Young (they refer to themselves as the “greyhound caucus”), skillfully orchestrated a **vote** to protect Florida’s racing greyhounds.

“The free market has spoken, and the free market has said ‘Dog racing is coming to an end.’” said Moskowitz in debate this morning. “This issue has a long way to go and with about a week left in the legislative session everyone is pushing into overdrive to move this bill.”

“It’s a battle of morals, and the moral for me is: I don’t think the government – indirectly and unintentionally so – should mandate animal cruelty. Because that’s what’s happening.”

Strong words from a young leader growing stronger.

Young’s bill passed the panel 10-8 by exactly the Moskowitz-led bipartisan majority outlined above. It now moves on to Appropriations.