

Why Horse Racing and Casinos = Bad Business for Georgia



FINANCIAL RED FLAGS:

Since 2000, **41 racetracks in the U.S. have permanently closed (26 of those within the last 10 years); in contrast, only 2 racetracks with casinos have opened.** Horse racing is an industry in decline with a shrinking customer base and is no longer a self-sustaining business. According to Statista (2022), the market value of horse racing has dropped 33% over the past 10 Years.

To keep horse racing profitable, the majority of states with racetracks **direct subsidies totaling approximately \$1 billion.** Most existing racetracks are coupled with casinos (aka, racinos) and are dependent upon a cut of casino revenue.

Gambling places additional burdens on already-strained mental health services and law enforcement to deal with associated addiction and crime. Casinos are a favored location for human (sex) trafficking, thus creating a grave public safety issue for victims, employees, and patrons.

The promise of jobs for Georgians will be low paying and low skill jobs. High paying jobs go to personnel that travel state to state with their horses (e.g., trainers, jockeys).

Discarded racehorses are a hefty burden for taxpayers and charitable donors. **The horse racing industry breeds approximately twice as many foals than are needed, and those that race retire after 3-4 years, creating an enormous surplus of unwanted horses requiring 20-30 years of lifetime care.** The cost of aftercare for a racehorse is typically thousands of dollars more per year than that for an average horse because of chronic medical issues.

The industry donates only a tiny fraction of its revenue for aftercare programs, which falls far short of the tens of millions of dollars needed, relying instead on charitable dollars for rescues, private adoptions, and auctioning excess horses to kill buyers for transport and subsequent slaughter in Mexico and Canada. According to an estimate by Jen Roytz, executive director of the Retired Racehorse Project, **the current number of Thoroughbred aftercare programs nationwide cannot accommodate half the horses that need rehoming** in an average year, even with full funding.

Given Georgia's robust state economy and commitment to public safety and mental health, Georgia does not need to assume the cost shift and risks inherent in the declining horse racing industry and associated gambling.

Why Horse Racing and Casinos = Bad Business for Georgia



Ethical Concerns Over Horse Safety and Welfare:

Approximately 1,000 racehorse deaths are reported each year on average. Because off track deaths may go unreported, this number is likely a gross underestimate. No other sport tolerates such a high incidence of catastrophic injuries and sudden death in athletes.

Horse Racing has a long history of criminal indictments for doping schemes including a widespread doping scheme involving 27 people in 2020 and a more recent indictment with a veterinarian and trainers in 2022.

Implementation of the federal Horse Racing Integrity and Safety Act - which establishes uniform anti-doping standards and medication control across all 50 states - does not protect Thoroughbreds after they leave racing.

The **Georgia Horse Racing Commission, proposed by state legislation to "oversee" racing and enforce rules, will not be independent** but instead will be made up of the very individuals who stand to make money on horse racing (i.e., racehorse owners and trainers).

Horse slaughter for human meat consumption is a predatory industry that benefits from retired, unwanted racehorses. An estimated 7,500 thoroughbreds a year are slaughtered for human consumption (according to Alex Waldrop, president of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA)). A 2022 poll of Americans showed that **83% are opposed to horse slaughter.**

Another abusive, ancillary industry to horse racing is the use of surrogate nurse mares for Thoroughbred foals. The nurse mare's biologic foals are slaughtered soon after birth for use as pony leather or left to starve to death. The mare then nurses the Thoroughbred foal. (*Mercy Foal in Atlanta is dedicated specifically to rescuing these orphaned foals.*)

Racehorses lead an unnatural existence, confined to stalls when not training and denied social herd interactions. They are very difficult and costly to retrain by humane adopters.

Given these abuses, it's not surprising that a 2022 public opinion survey (conducted by the industry) revealed that **69% of Americans have concerns about the safety and welfare of horses used in equestrian sports which includes horse racing.**