

Opposition to HB2173
2017 Legislation Session

Chairman Barker and members of the committee,

My name is Katie Barnett. I am a Douglas County resident and Kansas licensed attorney. I write you in opposition to House Bill 2173, specifically, sections incentivizing greyhound racing and requiring a ballot question to Sedgwick County residents.

My practice areas are primarily animal law, municipal law, and legislative drafting. I hope my testimony today explains the true detrimental economic impact this will have to the State of Kansas.

This bill attempts to create an incentive for greyhound racing to bolster the economy, but several states show us that the incentive approach simply will not have the intended effect for state revenue. According to the Association of Racing Commercial International, from 1990 to present, there has been an 81.5% reduction in gambling on live racing nationwide. More than thirty tracks have closed in ten states and dog racing remains legal and operational in only six states. Two tracks, one in the nearby states of Iowa and Texas, held their last races in December. Similarly, Kansas tracks experienced a 95% decline in greyhound gambling from 1989 to 2007, and all three tracks experienced such significant financial losses, live greyhound racing ended in August of 2008. The state did not close these racetracks down, the state did not make greyhound racing unlawful, the residents of Kansas voted with their dollars and unequivocally closed down greyhound racing. Any promise of economic growth by industry professionals to this committee completely ignores the facts. The very first addition under HB2173 has the breed registering agencies create a plan for economic development for greyhound racing, but history shows us that Kansas residents do not want greyhound racing in their communities and as such, programs drafted by these breed registering agencies will fail.

Recently, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City Kansas Planning Commission heard from proponents of re-opening the Woodlands Racetrack and within the approval for a special use permit, the Planning Commission noted that the permit shall not allow greyhound racing at the Woodlands. That eliminates one track from assumed revenue to the state. This is evidenced by the strikethrough of greyhound racing on page 16, line 31 of the proposed bill as an option for revenue out of Wyandotte County.

Finally, new Section 4, *requiring* Sedgwick County Board of Commissioners to not only to hold a special election, but drafting the language for the petition and the ballot question proposed to voters is overreaching by the State. I spoke with the Deputy Election Commissioner in Sedgwick County who recalled to me that there has not been a special election for something like this to her knowledge in the history of the county. Having this language in the bill requires tax payers cover the cost of a special election to accomplish what residents of Sedgwick County have already said: they do not want greyhound racing in their community. This language circumvents the local power of Sedgwick County, is costly to tax payers, and is the last option to proponents to open a greyhound track in Kansas. An industry that requires statutory intervention to force a special election question is not going to be supported by residents and therefore will not bring money to the state.

All of these efforts to save a dying industry is costly, overreaching, and will do nothing to bolster the economy in Kansas. As such, I oppose the greyhound incentives in this bill, specifically the proposed new sections 2, 4, and 5.



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