

STATE OF KANSAS



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Proponent Testimony in Support of SB 207
Submitted to the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee
on March 22, 2017 by Senator Rob Olson, District 23

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

I stand in support of SB 207 which seeks to re-establish the horse and greyhound racing and breeding industries in Kansas. The bill will boost state revenue, create new jobs, have a positive impact on the rural economy with a presence in nearly every county while supporting one of the few industries which continues to call Kansas home to its national association – the National Greyhound Association in headquartered in Abilene. Two times a year, hotels and restaurants are full while greyhound breeders from across the country and the world come to purchase new pups and breeding stock. A single pup born in Abilene, Kansas may go to a high bidder for more than \$60,000.

Some will say this is an expansion of gaming. But it is not. I was here when the Legislature passed the legislation in 2007 which allowed for the state to get into the casino business. Casino interests joined racing interests to pass SB 66, but then the casino interests quickly became protective of their legislatively gifted territory. We changed SB 66 a couple of years ago to lower the investment threshold so a casino could be built in Southeast Kansas. SB 66 always envisioned state owned casinos operating alongside existing horse and greyhound tracks.

SB 207 allows for the citizens of Wichita the opportunity to vote on whether they want to re-open the Wichita Greyhound Park. Look at the ballot language used in 2007 – it was not clear and it was confusing with the first question which asked voters whether they wanted to open a casino in Sedgewick County. The ballot language in SB 207 is very clear and concisely asks voters whether they want the Wichita Greyhound Park to reopen with electronic gaming machines. We know that when the Wichita Greyhound Park opened in 1989 it was a \$30 million private investment which employed 150 Kansans, more than 800,000 fans attended races and it was the number 4 tourist destination in the county. The Park had a direct operation economic impact of \$34 million.

When Camptown Greyhound Park opened in Frontenac in 1995, it was a \$12 million private investment and it employed more than 80 people.

These projects are not asking for state-support. They are not asking for STAR bonds or other state-sponsored incentives. This is private investment – which is exactly what we were elected to bring to Kansas. Projects that promote our state, projects that support families, jobs and opportunities in rural and urban areas and projects that help grow the Kansas economy.

We need to support SB 207. Our history is tied to the racing industry going clear back to 1872 when Eureka Downs first opened followed by Anthony Downs in 1904. We have breeders and suppliers ready to help support this industry – and I am sure they would rather support the industry here in Kansas than watch their money go to Oklahoma or other states. With SB 207 we can generate state revenue with no cost to taxpayers, generate new investment in Kansas economy and put the workforce of Kansas back to work. Let's allow the Kansas racing and breeding industries to work for the benefit of all Kansans and let 'em race!