

The House Federal and State Affairs Committee  
March 18, 2021  
Jim Gartland, Exec. Director,  
National Greyhound Association - Abilene, KS  
Opposed to SB84

Chairman Barker and members of the committee; thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Jim Gartland. I have been involved in the pari-mutuel racing industry for 40 plus years. Most of those years were spent in management at racetrack facilities, although I did take time, occasionally, to raise and race greyhounds over the years as well. Currently, I am the Executive Director of the National Greyhound Association, headquartered in Abilene, KS, and have served in that capacity for the past five years.

The NGA, was founded over 110 years ago (1906), and is greyhound racing's official registry, representing the greyhound owners and breeders in North America. Since 1944, the NGA has been located in Abilene. Abilene has also been home to the Greyhound Hall Of Fame since 1963. In addition, there are more greyhounds raised in Dickinson County than any other county in America—a claim the county has held since the 1970's. Put these impressive historical facts together and you can understand why Kansas and, in particular, Abilene is popularly known in racing circles as the Greyhound Capital of the World and has proudly held that title for more than four decades.

The NGA also plays a major role in the greyhound adoption community as a major partner in the American Greyhound Council (AGC). Part of my job places me as the coordinator for the AGC which includes awarding grants to scores of adoption programs around the country as well as providing hauling, feed and other supplies when and where necessary in the greyhound community. The AGC in conjunction with the NGA provides full time inspectors to visit, inspect and report on greyhound farms and other facilities throughout the United States.

But serving as the sport's registry and overseer are not the NGA's only functions. Going back to 1944, when the NGA established permanent roots in Abilene, our community has been the site of semi-annual national meets, held every April and October. The week's activities include racing competition for young pups, social programs, industry meetings, Hall Of Fame induction and awards ceremonies—all capped off at the end of the week by an auction for racing pups. These traditional gatherings attract as many as 500 racing aficionados from all over America—even some that make the trek from Europe and Australia. Some come to showcase and sell or lease their young pups; some come to purchase or lease pups for their racing kennels; some come for the social activities, or to see old friends. Some come because they've been coming to Abilene for 30, 40 or even 50 years or more. The impact on our little community is huge, filling hotels and restaurants, with a significant overflow into Salina and Junction City. Hundreds of thousands of dollars—most of it out-of-state—are pumped into the local county at each NGA Meet. And it has happened every six months, year in and year out, for the last 50 plus years.

The auctions are a dramatic climax at each national meet—with total pup sales on occasion exceeding more than \$1.5 million. Average sale is around \$10,000. The record single sale at an NGA Auction is \$96,000—the price paid for a single, untried pup at the spring auction in 2020. Despite declines in the industry in the last ten years, the NGA Meets have remained a vibrant fixture in our sport. Our next Meet is scheduled for April 19-23 and we encourage you to come and experience an NGA Meet in Abilene.

The industry is also seeing an uptick in wagering as evidenced by recent wagering figures out of West Virginia where the two tracks there are currently on pace to handle around \$75 million for the first quarter of this year, almost three times as much as last year. In fact, while soundly defeating similar legislation two years ago, West Virginia lawmakers not only saw past the animal rights agenda, but in debate, encouraged support and expansion of greyhound racing based on the potential for growth they saw, and now that state is reaping those benefits.

On a national perspective concerning the greyhound breeding industry—I'm happy to report that Kansas remains the leading producer of greyhound pups in the nation. It should be noted that Kansas didn't become the top pup producing state until after the state's tracks opened in the late 1980s. Why it has remained No. 1, even years after the tracks have been shuttered, speaks of the great reputation Kansas' greyhound farms—with the advantage of an ideal climate, soil conditions, water, etc.—have built for producing a high percentage of top racers throughout the sport's history. But the state's breeding industry will likely face dramatic declines if greyhounds and greyhound racing are excluded from any of these bills. In just the last year we have seen several large, long standing greyhound farms either make severe cutbacks or close down altogether. Greyhounds and greyhound farms have been a part of the fabric of the Kansas agriculture community for many, many years and it would be shame to have that taken away based on the baseless concerns of animal rights activists.

With all that as background, I oppose SB84 but would, in general, support a sports betting bill that is fair to all parties concerned. I am concerned as to the exclusion of greyhound racing from the sports wagering process. I would hope that perhaps greyhound racing could be afforded the opportunity to enjoy some of the same wagering platforms being offered for sports betting, i.e., mobile and internet wagering. I certainly do not want to see greyhound racing or greyhound racing facilities excluded, or should I say discriminated against as has been the case in many of the proposed bills. These actions open the door for legal challenges down the road and I hope the House does not make the same choice. Once again, I thank you for your time and stand for any questions you may have.