



Concerned Women for America
Legislative Action Committee

Open Letter to State Senate SR 135 - pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing

Concerned Women for America (CWA) of Georgia urges you to **oppose SR 135**, a constitutional amendment for pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing. CWA of Georgia opposes any form of gambling, including horse racing for the reasons stated below.

We oppose the proposed constitutional amendment because it is a ruse to usher in more gambling opportunities, such as slot machines and casinos. *The Atlantic* reported that horse racing attendance has declined almost 50 percent over the past two decades. The decline is so evident that the racing industry has stopped reporting attendance figures.ⁱ Many states are feeling the financial stress of trying to keep tracks open because of this decline.

The state of Illinois is a case in point. In an effort to keep several of its horse racing tracks open, state lawmakers attempted to pass legislation in 2014 that would allow the tracks to offer "historical racing" slot machines. According to an article on Southern.com, "State Rep. Dwight Kay, a Republican from Glen Carbon and bill sponsor, said the additional cash raised by the machines could keep tracks like Fairmount Park in his district open while lawmakers negotiate a larger, more comprehensive expansion of the state's gambling industry."ⁱⁱ Why does Georgia think it will be any different? When tax revenues fail to meet expectations, the obvious next choice will be to bring in more lucrative streams of revenue to the state through slots and casinos.

CWA of Georgia opposes SR 135 because any form of gambling is destructive and causes irreversible harm on individuals and families. Because of the decline of the horse racing industry, the Jockey Club has begun looking for more customers and is tapping into the 20-something age group. The Jockey Club is quoted as saying, "We have to speak the younger person's language through social media, racing apps and young people reaching out to young people."ⁱⁱⁱ Pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing normalizes gambling and has the potential to lead late teens and early twenty-year olds down the destructive path of gambling addiction. The same can really be said for all age groups.

Because of the detrimental effects of gambling on the family, eliminating gambling in all its forms is a top legislative priority for CWA of Georgia, and **we will be watching the progress of this bill very carefully and will be scoring any votes taken on SR 135**. Again, we ask you to **oppose SR 135**.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Tanya Ditty
State Director

ⁱ Henry D. Fetter, "No, Horse Racing Can't Be Saved—Even by a Triple Crown Winner," *The Atlantic* (May 20, 2014), available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/05/no-horse-racing-cant-be-savedeven-by-a-triple-crown-winner/371255/>.

ⁱⁱ Kurt Erickson, "Lawmakers pushes new gambling idea: Betting on old horse races," *The Southern* (November 17, 2014), available at http://thesouthern.com/news/local/lawmakers-pushes-new-gambling-idea-betting-on-old-horse-races/article_7b291fbf-94ab-537c-8cd9-e3320c43f28a.html.

ⁱⁱⁱ Monica Rodriguez, "Fairplex Park, Other Tracks Struggle with a Declining Interest in Horse Racing," *Daily Bulletin* (April 23, 2014), available at <http://www.dailybulletin.com/sports/20140423/fairplex-park-other-tracks-struggle-with-a-declining-interest-in-horse-racing>.