

HBPB Legislative Update

In the Home Stretch: Bills Heading to the Governor's Desk

The Senate concurred in amendments made by the House to H.B. 941 (Regan, R-Cumberland) last week; once it is signed by the Senate it will be before the governor for his signature. The bill amends the administrative code and includes provisions to restructure the Horse Racing Commission and Harness Racing Commission into a single commission. It also includes updated guidelines for the oversight of horse racing and pari-mutuel operations in the commonwealth. Once it is signed in the Senate, the governor will have 10 days to act on the bill.

For more information, go to:

http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billInfo/bill_history.cfm?year=2015&sind=0&body=H&type=B&bn=941

Out of the Gate: Bills Reported from Committee

On Feb. 10, the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee met to consider H.R. 616, sponsored by Majority Chairman Martin Causer (R-Cameron) and Minority Chairman Mike Carroll (D-Luzerne). The resolution directs the Joint State Government Commission, with the support of the Independent Fiscal Office, to study the regulations and policies regarding the horse racing industry in the commonwealth. The report, due Feb. 1, 2017, is to examine potential cost savings realized by streamlining the oversight of racing and gaming oversight functions, best practices used in other states to regulate racing, and an evaluation of the potential benefits and harms to the horse racing industry if pari-mutuel wagering is expanded. The bill was reported from the committee unanimously and is now before the full House for consideration.

For more information go to:

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2015&sInd=0&body=H&type=R&bn=0616>

The committee also considered H.B 1589 last week. Sponsored by Chairman Causer, the bill amends the fiscal code to provide funding for agricultural programs for the current (2015-2016) fiscal year. The bill would transfer \$25,659,000 from the Race Horse Development fund as follows:

- \$6.1 million to the State Racing Fund;
- \$5.35 million for the Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission;
- \$5.309 for the PA Veterinary Lab;
- \$4 million for state fairs; and
- \$5 million for the Farm Show.

The bill was given first consideration and is now on the House Tabled Calendar.

For more information, go to:

http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/bill_history.cfm?year=2015&sind=0&body=H&type=B&bn=1589

In the Paddock: 2016-2017 State Budget

On Feb. 9, Gov. Wolf gave his second budget address to a joint session of the state legislature. Wolf laid out his spending priorities for the 2016-2017 fiscal year, as well as a package of new taxes to cover their cost. And while the governor is proposing an 8-percent tax on promotional play at casinos, a tax on the sale of horses is not being put forward at this time.

Also, this year the governor is proposing to transfer \$30.659 million from the RHDF as follows:

- \$4 million for state fairs;
- \$5 million for the Farm Show;
- \$11 million to the State Racing Fund (\$5.5 million of which is for the Equine Toxicology and Research Laboratory);
- \$5.309 million to Pennsylvania's veterinary laboratories; and
- \$5.35 million to the Animal Health and Diagnostics Commission.

Hearings on the governor's proposed budget will begin on Feb. 22. The Department of Agriculture's budget hearing in the Senate will be held Mar. 1 at 3 p.m.; in the House it will be held Mar. 9 at 1:30 p.m.