



January 16, 2015

Dear Virginia Horsemen and Horsewomen:

As you probably know, last Fall Colonial Downs voluntarily surrendered its license to operate its New Kent race track and its nine off track betting parlors. That was a significant blow to our horse industry. In response, our horsemen (VHBPA and VHHA), our breeders (VTA), and the Virginia Gold Cup formed a new non-profit organization-the Virginia Equine Alliance-to maintain and expand racing and breeding in the state. The Alliance is exploring the possibility of leasing Colonial Downs as well as racing at other venues in the state. The latter includes expanded use of steeplechase courses, the Middleburg Training Center, and other sites like Oak Ridge (south of Charlottesville), where in the past we've run both thoroughbred and harness meets.

If the Equine Alliance is to succeed amendments to our state Racing Act are necessary. [Click here](#) to read the memo explaining legislative changes we support. Our amendments redirect wagering revenue that formerly went to Colonial Downs, as the only unlimited license holder in the state, to our Equine Alliance.

Senator Jill Vogel and Delegate Ed Scott are our chief patrons. The bills they introduced are SB 1097 and HB 1826. It's important that you help by contacting your local Delegate and Senator by phone, email, or letter to say you support SB 1097 and HB 1826. To find contact information for your representatives please go to whosmy.viriniageneralassembly.gov. **This year's legislative session is a short one, so it's important that you act NOW.**

The message to your legislators can be as simple as *"I support SB 1097 and HB 1826 because I want our native horse industry to survive and grow. Horses are a proud part of our state heritage. They provide thousands of jobs and preserve farms and green space for our children."*

One final point: Even though Colonial Downs gave up its license, track ownership is trying to keep the wagering revenue it used to get when it ran an eight week summer meet. Colonial wants to use the money to run a weekend or two of "high end" races with large purses, like the Virginia Derby and the Virginia Turf Cup. 4 to 6 days of "high end" will do nothing for Virginia racing. In the past ten years not one Virginia bred, Virginia owned, or Virginia trained horse won one of the big races. All the purse money went to Kentucky, Florida, New York, and California. Big races are fine, but only as part of a regular summer meet that gives Virginia horsemen an opportunity to race.

Colonial's legislation, sponsored by Senator Thomas Norment and Delegate Barry Knight, is SB 1313 and HB 2224. When you write or call to support our legislation please add a sentence or two saying your oppose SB 1313 and HB 2224 because *"they send money raised in Virginia to the horse industry in other states."*

There is a good chance we will need to call on some of you in the coming weeks to meet with representatives individually or to make an appearance in Richmond. The window to meet with these legislators may be small, but the opportunity will be vital to our lobbying effort.

If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Equine Alliance Executive Director Jeb Hannum, jeb.hannum@viriniaequinealliance.com, (484) 238-6290; VTA Executive Director Debbie Easter, debbie.easter@easterassociates.com, (434) 531-2480; or VHBPA Executive Director Frank Petramalo, fpetramalo@msn.com, (703) 999-7491.

You are also invited to the VHBPA's general membership meeting on Sunday, January 18th, at 6 p.m. at the Meadow Event Park (1311 Dawn Blvd, Route 30, Doswell, VA). Come listen and take part in a discussion of plans for 2015.

Thank you for your support.