

Kentucky's VLT legislation would have been the most comprehensive in the nation

The recently proposed legislation to authorize video lottery terminals (VLTs) at Kentucky's race tracks was the most comprehensive show of support for the entire horse industry in the U.S. It was a direct correlation to the Kentucky Equine Education Project's (KEEP) sole mission to unite the Commonwealth's world-class horse industry, both racing and non-racing breeds.

Since its inception in 2004, KEEP's membership has grown to more than 15,000 equine enthusiasts who represent various horse breeds and each of Kentucky's 120 counties.

One of KEEP's main goals is to encourage economic development through the creation of jobs and other lucrative opportunities for the Kentucky equine industry. The recently proposed VLT legislation would have done just that—by allocating revenue generated by the VLTs to:

- expand the Kentucky Breeders' Incentive Program (KBIF), a program that offers economic incentives to encourage ownership of all Kentucky-bred horses, even non-racing breeds;
- supplement purses and equine incentives for all Kentucky racing breeds—Standardbreds, Quarter Horses and Thoroughbreds; and
- create the Kentucky Equine Breed Authority, an organization that will promote the health and welfare of horses, construct new and improve upon existing equine facilities and riding trails.

In order to benefit the hardworking individuals who breed and care for our beloved horses, the legislation would have included a sales tax exemption on feed and equipment for horses—an exemption that is already enjoyed by those who breed and care for other Kentucky livestock.

To maintain the integrity of the sport, \$5 million would have been earmarked to properly fund the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission.

The legislation would have assured live racing dates year-round in Kentucky. In addition, a percentage of the tracks' share would have been dedicated to backside improvements to replace or remodel barns, stable area facilities and saddling paddocks at the tracks.

Any interest generated on the share of purse accounts that came from VLTs would have gone to the Kentucky Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, an organization that provides health and welfare services for horsemen, and promotes and protects their interests on a number of fronts. The money could have been directed to one of four uses—Kentucky Racing Health and Welfare Fund, shipping, stabling or insurance.

In conclusion, the most recently proposed VLT legislation in Kentucky would have been, by far, the most comprehensive expanded gaming bill in the industry. While some states have made some good strides with their gaming legislation, they stopped short of funding non-racing breeds—something Kentucky's legislation would have done. As it should be, Kentucky would have had the most comprehensive bill in the U.S. Now, we just need to get similar legislation passed.