



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

Senate Passes Larkin Race Track Felon Bill

[WILLIAM J. LARKIN JR.](#) June 5, 2005

Legislation sponsored by Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson) to make anyone convicted of a felony ineligible to operate a thoroughbred or harness race track, or a video lottery gaming facility was passed by the State Senate today.

In addition to preventing felons from obtaining a thoroughbred or harness racing license, Senate bill 2346 would also revoke the convicted person's license if he or she currently holds one and allow the State Racing & Wagering Board to replace that person with someone better qualified.

"A lawyer who is convicted of a felony is automatically disbarred; a school bus driver found guilty of a felony can't drive a school bus," explained Senator Larkin. "But, surprisingly, current law does not prohibit convicted felons from obtaining a racing or gaming license. There is something wrong here."

Larkin said it has always been assumed that anyone convicted of a felony would be ineligible for one of these licenses. However, this is not the case according to current law. Over the past few years, investigations within New York's racing industry have led to criminal indictments of certain individuals and corporations that hold horse race track licenses. Unfortunately, as a result, the public image of this industry has been tainted to some degree.

"At a time when the current state of racing in New York is tenuous, it follows that the law should clearly state that convicted felons should not be allowed to conduct race meets or handle betting monies at the tracks," said Larkin. "For the prestige and stature of New York racing here and in the rest of the country, it is important that the people who hold racing licenses are held to the highest moral and ethical standards. The betting public should have the utmost confidence in an racing industry that is such an important part of the New York economy."

This bill also outlines a procedure to replace the convicted person with someone who is qualified so that race meets can still be conducted without interruption. Without this provision, race meets would have to be put on hold causing tremendous losses to groups such as farmers, track employees, horse owners, trainers, breeders, and vendors. The bill would protect thousands of jobs from being put at risk.

Another provision in the bill makes it very clear that any convicted felon would also be unable to obtain or continue to hold a license to operate a video lottery gaming facility.