



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

Larkin Releases Annual Report On Racing, Gaming, & Wagering

[WILLIAM J. LARKIN JR.](#) April 4, 2005

Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-on-Hudson) today announced the release of the New York State Senate Standing Committee's 2004 Annual Report on Racing, Gaming, and Wagering. Among its contents, the report includes a comprehensive study that analyzes the problems within the horse racing industry. Further, it lays out a plan of action to address those problems.

"This past year, racing and gaming issues were very much in the forefront of discussions centered on state revenue and the economy," said Senator Larkin. "This annual report outlines the Senate Committee's work over the past twelve months on a wide range of racing and gaming issues, analyzes current research, and the role of government, community and industry, and offers strategic directions for the future of the racing and gaming industries in New York State."

The report found that the horse racing industry has been experiencing a significant decrease in handle and purses over the past few years. In order to protect its future and thousands of jobs, "The industry needs to immediately refocus its marketing strategies to attract patrons," said Senator Larkin. "To remain profitable and continue contributing to the state's economy, we should be developing ways to help revitalize the horse racing and equine industry in New York State."

The Senate Committee made several recommendations to boost the racing industry including encouraging more attendance at race tracks; making OTB facilities more patron friendly; encouraging OTB's to promote more in-state races; revising the VLT formula so that race track vendors can receive added income which they would reinvest in their facilities; making the New York Racing Association (NYRA) profitable by lowering its expenses and requiring it to submit to government oversight; and increasing horse breeder funds for the more than 400 breeding farms in New York State.

This year, Larkin has introduced a package of legislation specifically designed to address the problems facing the New York racing industry including: S.2351 which gives more groups of people free passes to attend race tracks; S.2349 which would help vendors better integrate VLT's with live horse races; S.2594 which directs more VLT revenue to promote race tracks; S.6431 which forces NYRA to cover its skyrocketing expenses by increasing its take out percentages; S.2352 which taps the profits of out-of-state facilities that simulcast New York races; and S.2350 which devotes a small percentage of international simulcasting revenue to the NYS Thoroughbred Breeding and Development Fund. Many of these bills will be considered by the Racing and Wagering Committee at its next meeting on Tuesday, March 22nd at 9:00 am in Albany.

"The fact is that New Yorkers go elsewhere for recreational gaming, horse betting, and entertainment," said Senator Larkin. "The gambling dollars people are already spending could be benefiting New York State instead of our neighboring states and places like Las Vegas. VLT's have the potential to generate hundreds of millions of dollars for New York State education programs, which was the original intent of the program. And our race track facilities have the potential to become nationally recognized as true tourist destinations. Ultimately, our goal is to keep the revenue we are losing every day here in New York."

Senator Larkin welcomes comments from residents and other interested parties on the information and conclusions in the study.