



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Craig M. Johnson

Senator Johnson to Hold NYRA Hearing in Elmont

CRAIG M. JOHNSON January 18, 2010

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ELMONT, N.Y. -- Senator Craig M. Johnson, (D-Nassau), Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Investigations and Government Operations, announced he will be holding a hearing on the condition of the New York Racing Association's finances, its threat to hurt the local economy by canceling the Belmont Stakes, and how NYRA used a \$105 million taxpayer-funded bailout.

The Feb. 3 hearing, which will be held jointly with the Senate Committee on Racing, Wagering, and Gaming, will begin at 11 a.m. at the Elmont Public Library, 700 Hempstead Turnpike, Elmont, NY. It will additionally focus on the state of New York's thoroughbred racing industry in comparison to other states.

This action was spurred by NYRA's recent claims that they were going to become insolvent – possibly closing down its tracks and cancel the Belmont Stakes – before the end of the year if a VLT operator was not chosen for the Aqueduct Race Track.

These assertions come less than two years after the State extended NYRA's racing franchise – awarding it \$105 million in taxpayer funds and forgiving nearly \$100 million in debt.

“NYRA's threat to cancel the Belmont Stakes and greatly damage our local economy certainly raises questions about how they have spent their taxpayer-funded windfall,” said Senator Johnson, who voted against the NYRA bailout. “Belmont's host communities have spent a lot of time and effort on a plan to redevelop the track as an economic development engine. We need to make sure that management decisions today do not jeopardize tomorrow's prosperity.”

The Senate's inquiry will also include questions about the physical operations of the track.

NYRA was recently cited by the state Department of Environmental Conservation for discharging horse manure, wastewater and other pollutants into Jamaica Bay via the Nassau County storm drain system.

In preparation for the hearing, Senator Johnson and Senator Eric Adams, chairman of the Racing, Gaming and Wagering Committee, requested copies of NYRA's financial statements, tax returns, and correspondence concerning the Association's fiscal situation.

A copy of the letter can be found below.