



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

## Bonacic: Some in Assembly Are Trying to Take Millions From Monticello and Send It to New York City

JOHN J. BONACIC April 7, 2010

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State Senator John J. Bonacic (R/I/C – Mt. Hope), today said the New York City OTB should be closed down rather than bailed out. He also said that the OTB operations in the City should be subjected to a new competitive bidding process. “New York City OTB is a giant patronage mill that has failed to increase the racing fan base. New York State needs to transform, not just tinker with the way off track betting occurs in New York City, and probably the entire State,” Bonacic said.

Bonacic, in addition to serving as the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Racing, Wagering & Gaming also represents a harness racing track, Monticello, in his four County Senate District.

A proposal currently being discussed in Albany will stop payments to Monticello in the amount of approximately \$2 million a year. Monticello is already struggling. “If this plan were enacted, it would be a crystal clear example of New York City Democrats, who control State government, not caring about anyone but themselves. Attempting to take millions of dollars from the Catskills economy, to pay for their New York City based OTB operation, is something those of us who represent race tracks - particularly Yonkers and Monticello, must fight,” Bonacic said.

An effort is being made to build consensus around a plan which would take approximately \$2 million this year in payments Monticello and its horsemen would otherwise be entitled to, and use those funds to help restructure New York City OTB.

Bonacic also said the State must make a concerted effort to increase the racing fan base of both harness and thoroughbred tracks. “The long term future of New York racing is threatened because it has become about VLTs and patronage instead of about world class racing. First, NYRA threatened to shut down the Belmont and Saratoga in an effort to have the State give them more money. Now, OTB is demanding more money, otherwise they will close down. Racing was once known as the sport of kings and as a revenue generator to help reduce taxes for hard working New Yorkers. Now racing has become a patronage mill and something hard working New Yorkers are being asked to subsidize,” Bonacic said.

The *New York Times* today reports that New York City OTB is proposing to close down about 66% of the City’s OTB operations but only reduce the size of the New York City OTB workforce by about 46%. “If you only have 1/3 of the facilities, you should only have 1/3 of the employees. Closing down 66% of the OTB facilities while still keeping more than half the employees of that operation, all while taking revenue from upstate, confirms my belief that patronage, rather than sound business operations, are at the heart of New York City OTB’s operations,” Bonacic said.

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**STATEMENT BY JOSEPH D'AMATO, CEO OF EMPIRE RESORTS/MONTICELLO CASINO AND RACEWAY, REGARDING THE NYC OTB BAILOUT PROPOSAL**

*The New York harness horse racing industry has been in transition for decades. Unlike New York City OTB, tracks have been forced to modify their operations or close. At Monticello, this is an ongoing process in which we have streamlined operations and have worked hard to improve our racing, gaming and entertainment products.*

*However, our racing viability is threatened by a proposed state plan that would, in effect, punish those who have done the right things to become more competitive and reward those who have not. Specifically, the state would take vital resources from Monticello Raceway and our horsemen and give those resources to New York City OTB.*

*Such action is simply unfair. It will cost jobs at our track and only result in further overall decline in the racing industry. We urge state lawmakers to reconsider this ill-advised approach.*

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