



*Illinois Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, Inc.*



## **State's Failure to Adhere to the Law Deepens Illinois Racing's Competitive Disadvantage While Compromising Jobs At Tracks and Across Agribusiness**

*Statement from Illinois Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association,  
Illinois Harness Horsemen's Association and  
Illinois Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association*

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Purse earnings support thousands of jobs throughout Illinois and sustain the horse racing industry. Horse owners, trainers, backstretch workers at the state's three tracks, breeders, veterinarians, blacksmiths, thoroughbred jockeys and standardbred drivers, and feed and hay suppliers across downstate all depend on purse dollars to earn their living.

But due to "recapture," a law unique to horse racing in Illinois, purses are substantially depleted each year when tracks are allowed to remove dollars from the purse accounts. The same law permitting the tracks to collect those purse dollars, however, also requires the state to reimburse the purse accounts in amounts equal to the sums swept away by the tracks. (In 2017 alone, tracks will take more than \$11 million from purses.) However, the state is not honoring its commitment to make the purse accounts whole.

For more than 14 years, Illinois lawmakers have failed to appropriate funds to reimburse the purse accounts as required by law. Illinois horsemen have filed a lawsuit to compel the state to rectify that. We are asking a judge to order the Illinois comptroller to pay to the thoroughbred and standardbred purse accounts all amounts that the Illinois Racing Board has certified for the tracks to take from those accounts.

The Illinois Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, the Illinois Harness Horsemen's Association, and the Illinois Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association are plaintiffs in the case, as is Mike Campbell, president of the ITHA, in his capacity as an owner.

Even as Illinois horse racing struggles to compete with other states using casino-style gaming to generate revenue to boost purse awards, this state's failure to replenish the purse accounts deepens our competitive disadvantage by reducing the size of purses. It is exacerbating the collapse of our industry and undermining the vital role our sport plays in promoting tourism and supporting local jobs at the tracks and across agribusiness.

Enforcing the law and requiring the state to replenish the purse accounts is the singular act that can quickly improve Illinois purses and stop the exodus of jobs from Illinois racing.

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