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The Desperate Need for a Central Governing Body in Horse Racing (/full-blog/2013/04/the-desperate-need-for-central.html)

"H. Robb Levinsky" (/full-blog?category=%22H.+Robb+Levinsky%22), "horse racing industry" (/full-blog?category=%22horse+racing+industry%22)



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By: Jordan Stanton, Staff Member

"Imagine the NBA if every state had different-sized courts, different referees and rules, and no coordinated schedule." [1] That colorable analogy by racing enthusiast, H. Robb Levinsky, sums up the present pitfall in the horse racing industry. Currently there is no central governing body responsible for providing uniformity throughout the sport. [2] Instead, rules and regulations vary

from state to state, which has been a profound reason for the sport's demise.[3] Levinsky urges that the main reason the sport has failed to generate significant media attention is because there is not a consistent product to follow.[4]

So how does this billion dollar industry bolster its declining product?[5] This issue is not foreign to congressional consideration. In 2008, a congressional hearing directly focused on the state of thoroughbred racing.[6] The meeting generated potential solutions to remedy this fractured industry, but nothing ended up coming to fruition.[7] Interested parties have suggested that horse racing adopt the commissioner approach which has been lucratively implemented by the National Football League, National Basketball Association, and Major League Baseball.[8] However, this desire has been met with opposition from parties that wish to continue the current practice of individual state operation.[9] Further, opponents of the commissioner approach assert that the industry is in such poor shape that it has no way of successfully reforming.[10]

Betting totals in horse racing took a three billion dollar hit from 2007 to 2010.[11] Horse racing is immersed with issues relating to gambling competition, lack of media exposure, drug problems, and overall poor public perception.[12] The remedy to those problems appears clear. Boxing and horse racing are the only two sports in this country that have no central governing body, and, oddly enough, they are both in the worst shape.[13] With that being said, for this industry to emerge from the depths of rapid decline, Congress needs to push for a bill requiring the creation of a national horse racing commission, similar to what is already in place in the NBA, NFL, and MLB. Since horse racing has failed to put greed to the side, if this industry has any hopes of resurgence, Congress needs to step in and create a governing body to uniformly address the problems festering in horse racing, before it is too late.

[1] John Platt, *Horse Racing: An Industry in Crisis*, MOTHER NATURE NETWORK (June 7, 2012, 3:56 PM), <http://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/stories/horse-racing-an-industry-in-crisis>.

[2] *Id.*

[3] *Id.*

[4] *Id.*

[5] *Id.* (stating that the horse racing industry has a \$39 billion dollar direct economic impact).

[6] Mike Jensen, *Reforms in Horse Racing? Central Body for Industry Considered at Hearing*, THE ESQUIRE (June 20, 2008), http://articles.philly.com/2008-06-20/sports/25250567_1_delaware-park-national-thoroughbred-racing-association-thoroughbred-horse-owner.

[7] *Id.*

[8] William C. Rhoden, *Uncontrolled Sport May Not Merit Triple Crown Glory*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (May 27, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/28/sports/horse-racing-may-not-deserve-triple-crown-glory.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&_.

[9] *Id.*

[10] *Id.*

[11] Andrew Beyer, *Betting Totals Continue to Decline in Thoroughbred Racing*, THE WASHINGTON POST (Apr. 22, 2011), http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-04-22/sports/35230725_1_jim-gagliano-thoroughbred-population-sport.

[12] Bennett Liebman, *Reasons for the Decline of Horse Racing*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (June 6, 2010, 10:34 AM), <http://the.rail.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/06/reasons-for-the-decline-of-horse-racing/>.

[13] Rhoden, *supra* note 8.

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