



ONE COMMON BOND—THE HORSE; ONE COMMON VOICE— MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

MHC UPDATE

mdhorsecouncil.org

A Message from the President-Elect, Stuart Pittman

Thank you - and congratulations - from the Maryland Horse Council to everyone who put out yard signs, slipped brochures under windshield wipers at horse shows, forwarded e-mail blasts to their personal networks, and voted YES for slots. We won, by a landslide! Voters chose to save the Maryland horse racing industry, along with their own pocket books.

Now we must ask ourselves, what does the victory mean?

The Big Picture

A segment of our industry, the racing folks, are getting a financial boost. They will actually have some resources not only to enhance purses, but also to promote their sport. They are smart people and they are already strategizing about how to do this.

The rest of the horse world is the first group that racing can and should market to. By promoting all horse sports along with racing, everyone in the industry benefits. Anyone who has been to the Kentucky Horse Park can clearly see how this works. It's a public showcase for the horse, and you can't leave the place without a sense of reverence for the great race horses that populate that state's bluegrass.

Political power is all about enthusiasm and alliances. The voters' support for slots has breathed some enthusiasm into the racing side of our industry. It was won through an alliance that included the Maryland Horse Council, the Maryland Farm Bureau, all sectors of the racing industry, the AFL-CIO, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce, and the office of Governor O'Malley. Now is the time to take that alliance and that enthusiasm and move it to new issues.

Let's strengthen the Maryland Horse Industry Board. Let's recognize that horse farms are good for the environment and help them to become even better environmental stewards. Let's enhance what the University of Maryland does for the horse industry in our state. Let's take another look at creating a Maryland Horse Park with a museum in it that celebrates the fact that American racing began here.

We all know how good horses are for us as individuals and for the communities where they exist. Now is the time to market that truth to the entire state, from the citizens all the way up to the General Assembly and the Governor.

The Maryland Horse Council needs you to take advantage of this moment. Go tour our web site. Come to the next meeting. Sign up as a member!

The Boring Detail

Bids are due in February from businesses and partnerships who would like to install and operate slots in each of the five proposed areas, in Anne Arundel, Cecil, Worcester, and Allegany Counties and Baltimore City. Most of these are expected to be at Thoroughbred or Standardbred race tracks, with the exception of

On November 18, the membership elected the following officers:

Stuart Pittman as president

Amy Burk as vice president

Royce Herman as treasurer

Christine Bricker as secretary

The officers will serve a term of two years, beginning July 1, 2009. The next election will be for the members of the Executive Committee. If you are interested in serving on the Executive Committee, which meets monthly and acts as the steering committee for MHC, please contact current president, Mike Erskine, at mikedvm@aol.com or 301-854-5689

Allegany County. The slots legislation requires that 2.5% of revenues go to a race track facility renewal fund, which will benefit racing and increase attendance. That is in addition to the 7% that goes to enhance purses. The law also requires that the racing industry develop and implement a marketing strategy. The first revenues will not be seen until 2010.

Some people have predicted that the 33% of revenues that go to the slots operators to cover their investment and expenses is not enough for them to break even. Other states allow closer to 40% and more. Some legislators have said that if bids from operators do not come in then the General Assembly could amend the law to increase that percentage.

Oh, and if you like playing slots yourself, take note that in Maryland the machines are more generous than in neighboring states. State law requires them to pay out an average of between 87% and 90% of what goes in. Much better than the state lottery!

Anne Arundel Again!

If you happen to live in Anne Arundel County the fight isn't over. Laurel Race Track is potentially the biggest slots venue, and the one most important to the Thoroughbred industry. It is in Anne Arundel County, the place where County Executive John Leopold put an end to our plans for a Maryland Horse Park in Gambrills.

Leopold and the County Council could block slots at Laurel through zoning ordinance. Two council members have said that they intend to do so. Leopold was leaning in their direction until voters in his county spoke so clearly at the polls in support of slots. Now he says that he will not stand in the way, "so long as there is unanimous support" for slots at Laurel on the County Council. Clearly we have some work to do, and by the time you read this it will be well

underway but not yet over. If you live in Anne Arundel County and can help lobby some council members, e-mail me at dodonfarm@verizon.net.

Maryland Horse Council Meeting
Thursday, January 15, 2009 at 7 p.m.
Meet & Greet Reception at 6 p.m.
Administration Building Meeting Room
Maryland State Fair Grounds in Timonium
(Location of Horse World Expo)

Maryland Horse Council membership is open to all associations, farms, businesses and individuals.

To join, please visit mdhorsecouncil.org, contact secretary@mdhorsecouncil.org or call 410-489-7826 and request a membership form.

The Maryland Horse Council is sponsored by Naden/Lean, LLC, Southern States, Maryland Horse Breeders Association, and The Equiry.