

Thomas J. Murtha, III, DVM
190 VFW Parkway
Revere, MA 02151

September 6, 2009

Massachusetts State Legislature

Dear Sirs:

My name is Dr. Thomas J. Murtha. I am the track veterinarian at Wonderland Greyhound Park. Like many of the people who have come here today, the Massachusetts Racing Industry has provided work for me and those who work for me for over two decades.

I am one of thousands who make their living through the Massachusetts Racing Industry. As the Massachusetts legislature well knows, the proliferation of other forms of gambling in nearly every state that borders Massachusetts, and beyond – as well as the growing popularity of off-shore and internet gambling – have substantially eroded the ability of the Massachusetts Racing Industry to compete for gaming dollars which flow out of state every year.

Each year the Massachusetts Racing Industry loses patrons. The State of Massachusetts loses untold millions in tax revenues. And the taxpayers of this Commonwealth ultimately lose, because hundreds of millions of dollars in gaming tax revenue leaves this state. Instead of being used to assist and improve the cities and towns of this state, these monies are used to improve the schools, police and fire departments, and lower other taxes for the residents of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, and so on.

I have heard it reported that in spite of no assistance from our own state government and the lack of a level playing field with other states, the Massachusetts racing industry and its employees still generate over \$50 million dollars in total tax revenues each year for the commonwealth. With the state in a dire financial crisis, it is beyond me how the legislature would or could even consider NOT extending the rights and livelihoods of those citizens in this state who have participated in greyhound racing for most of the last century. Where else is all that money going to come from??

My primary reason for writing to you today is to try to dispel some of the propaganda and hysteria generated in recent years by extremist groups like Grey 2K. These “activists” have systematically and intentionally cultivated distorted perceptions of our industry in our local press and would have you believe that we in the Massachusetts racing industry

are inhumane, negligent, and abusive in our treatment of the animals who grace us with our livelihoods.

I grew up on a small farm in central Massachusetts. There, I learned from my father, also a veterinarian, that animals could be used in humane ways for agricultural purposes. I've worked in research at Harvard Medical School. There, I learned that animals could be used – with great discretion – in research to expand the boundaries of our knowledge in science and achieve truly wondrous things that benefit not only mankind, but all the species inhabiting our planet. And I've spent the last twenty two years of my life seeing to it that there was no abuse or neglect of racing greyhounds – not on my watch. I am also a surgeon in private clinical practice in the Boston area. I can honestly say that, although I have never seen abuse or neglect of a racing greyhound, I do regularly see abuse and neglect of pets in my clinical practice.

I took the position as Veterinary Department Head at Wonderland Greyhound Park as an independent contractor specifically so that I did not have to answer to anybody. From the very beginning I chose not to be an employee of Wonderland Greyhound Park for one reason only – so that no one could tell me what to do or how to do it, and so that nobody could tell me what to say. I have never been one to be told what to do. In truth and in fact, I actually took the position with the intent to “uncover” and “clean-up” any neglect or abuse of racing greyhounds at Wonderland.

Well, I'm writing to you today to tell you what I have come to know to be the truth in over two decades on the job. There simply isn't any neglect or abuse of racing greyhounds at Wonderland. Quite the opposite. It has been my experience that racing greyhounds in the state of Massachusetts are, in fact, very well cared for. But if there were any neglect or abuse going on, I would personally put a stop to it and I would have absolutely zero hesitation or problem reporting it to the proper authorities. If there were ever abuse or neglect of animals and I was unable stop it, I would quit in a heartbeat. I wouldn't be a part of itnot for a moment..... and then I'd be the biggest whistle-blower this state has ever seen.

As you may recall, in 2005 these anti-racing activists, using their usual deceptive tactics, attempted to cultivate public fear and concern through well-placed newspaper articles that unnecessarily, unreasonably and even irresponsibly raised the question about whether a respiratory virus affecting greyhounds at that time might “jump” to petsand even humans. These articles quoted public health experts as saying, “we just don't know enough at this time to say.....that it couldn't be possible”. Well, four years later we're all still here – none of us or our pets have died from the “infamous Grey 2K canine flu virus”

To these extremists and their political agenda, the truth is irrelevant. Their political goal justifies their means to achieve it.

I have to admit to being somewhat of a skeptic. Part of me believes that in today's world, maybe the truth really doesn't matter. Maybe we're all wasting our time here. Maybe a

decision has already been made in some back room of this building about the fate of the racing industry in the State of Massachusetts.

And then there's a small part of me that wants to believe that the truth really does matter. That this legislative process really does work. And that our government truly is a government for all the people and by all the people – not just for those who have organized to achieve their own political agenda.

On almost any given day you can turn the pages of nearly any newspaper in this state and read about the neglect and abuse of HUMAN BEINGS. Children being abused in daycare the elderly being abused in nursing homes..... priests abusing children in churches.

Why then, are there no referendums or movements to ban daycare centers, or nursing homes, or organized religion? Because reason prevails. People are intelligent enough to realize that you simply can't hold an entire industry or all religions accountable for the misdeeds or irresponsible acts of a select few individuals.

Rather, these problems are addressed – as they should be – through enacting new laws and regulations or creating new regulatory agencies to oversee these industries and ensure that these acts of abuse do not occur in the future.

Don't buy into the hype and propaganda. Be the voice of reason and don't allow your vote to be influenced by all the misinformation that's been "put out there" for the sole purpose of persuading you that you're "doing the right thing" – regardless of the actual truth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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Thomas J. Murtha, DVM

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Thomas J. Murtha, DVM