

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2017

I would like to start by congratulating Mike Wise and the crew at Rillito for putting on another successful meet! Mike has done a great job of involving the U of A students into help running the race meet. Ray Paulick has been publishing a story weekly about a different student and their responsibilities at the track. Mike also hosted an AzHBPA horsemen meeting on February 25th. The meeting was well attended by horsemen, management, ADOR, President Yother and myself. Several issues were discussed and resolved at the meeting.

President Yother and myself are currently having biweekly meeting with ADOR director Greg Stiles and Turf Paradise GM Vincent Francia. These meetings are designed to address the issues and concerns of our members and the operations of Turf Paradise. If you have an issue or concern that you would like us to address, please submit them to Wendy Hobson or myself and we will address the issue at the next meeting.

Our annual National Convention was held in Las Vegas on March 7th thru the 11th at the South Point Resort. Several topics were discussed. Corey Johnsen the President and part owner of Kentucky Downs was the keynote speaker. Corey has taken a struggling race track and added historical racing machines and turned it into a very profitable operation with Kentucky bred Maiden Special Weight races in 2017 will be a purse of \$100,000!! Medication was a hot topic at the convention, a lot of discussion on contamination leading to positive tests, as well as the thresholds for a positive test. Our National HBPA is constantly working on your behalf on Medication issues. Another important issue for National is continually working on uniformity on medication rules throughout all the different jurisdictions. Our Labor Relations Attorney Will Velie presented an update on the H2B visas situation and the new administration's policies. Be sure and checkout your next issue of the Horseman Journal, it will have detailed reports on all the topics mentioned above from the convention. Also, you can go to the National HBPA website and find the information as well.

In my short time, here in Arizona I have realized that the one thing that would be extremely helpful is alternative gaming to supplement the purse account. I have had several conversations with Mr. Jerry Simms on this topic he is working very hard on making this a reality. President Yother, Bas Aja and myself are exploring all options with alternative gaming as well.

President Yother, Dr. Santoro, Bas Aja and myself met with the Governor's Policy Chief Gretchen Martinez. We discussed trying to retrieve the \$200,000 for Breeders Awards, that was earlier removed from this year's budget. We also discussed the Racing Wagering Assessment that has been taking over a million dollars a year from your purse account. Although there were no promises made we did get our message across to Ms. Martinez. The team will continue working on this with meetings next week with Legislators.

I am sure you are all aware we are having an election. The ballots are being mailed out between March 12th and 20th. If you do not receive a ballot, please notify the AzHBPA office. It is important that everyone votes. In regards to the election the board has asked me to point out a couple of inaccuracies in Mr. John Campo's letter that was circulating on Facebook and was mailed to our membership. The statement that your current board gave away \$2,5 million is false. First it was the contract that was signed in December 2009 not the current contract, that made the deal for the 60/40 split on the first \$3,000 of daily handle on the old OTB locations and on the first \$4,000 of daily handle on the OTB locations opened after 2009. This 60/40 split is only done during the time of the live race meet, not during the summer months. What this costs the purse account is more like \$50,000 a year. However, if the 2009 AzHBPA board would not have made this deal we would not have had the expansion of additional OTB sites that we have today. We currently have over 60 locations and will be adding more in Tucson in 2019. In regards to days of live racing, yes days have been cut but that is ONLY because of the lack of purse funds and inventory of horses. The board has been faced with tough decisions on how to fund the races with the money we have in the purse account. The board can only payout what is earned through the wagering at Turf Paradise, the OTB's and ADW. They have been successful in keeping us 5 days of racing per week, a lot of tracks around the country have gone to 4 days per week. However, the new board will be faced with difficult decisions for next year as well. Cut more days or lower purses??? As far as transparency the board wants all its members to know they are welcome in the AzHBPA office anytime to look at any documents they choose.

Another rumor circulating is that your purse monies are being used for attorney fees for the Ron Simms vs Arizona lawsuit, this is false, currently legal fees for this lawsuit are being paid by the State's Risk Assessment Fund and AzHBPA board has no control of this fund.

Please be sure to take a few minutes to fill out and mail in your ballot. Every vote counts!

Leroy Gessmann
Executive Director

