

Editorial & Opinion

Scott Newton, editor
Kimberly Nelson, advertising representative

House should OK bill allowing off-track betting

The Oregon House of Representatives should act quickly to adopt legislation that would allow off-track gambling on horse and greyhound racing at up to 10 betting parlors throughout the state.

Such wagering currently is allowed at the Multnomah Kennel Club in East Multnomah County, at Portland Meadows in north Portland and for a limited time at a horse track in Salem during the Oregon State Fair.

Off-track betting legislation passed the Senate last week by a 18 to 12 vote in spite of objections from some senators who complained that the bill would promote compulsive gambling and cause an increase in crime, divorce and other problems. The bill now will be considered by the House of Representatives and, if approved, must be signed by Gov. Neil Goldschmidt.

The protests offered by several senators are based on myth. And myths are not the basis of good public policy.

Legislators opposed to allowing off-track wagering to occur in state licensed and monitored restaurant/lounges should remember that the state of Oregon already is involved in gambling in a very big way. The state is the sole proprietor of the Oregon Lottery and spends thousands of dollars on a daily — if not hourly — basis to encourage more and more wagering. The lottery has even become hot news. Each night, commercial television stations report the results of the "daily four" contest as if they were breaking a news story.

Off-track betting provides opportunity for residents of other areas of the state to have easier access to wagering already allowed Oregonians who live in close proximity to MKC, Portland Meadows or the state fair. Off-track betting also represents an opportunity for the state to earn more revenue. Before a bettor is paid off for a correct wager, the state gets its share. It is estimated the state earns from \$5 million to \$6 million from the existing level of wagering at MKC, Portland Meadows and the state fair. And off-track betting also would serve as a form of economic development. If betting parlors are created in communities such as Beaverton, Eugene or Salem, new jobs will follow. And that's not bad.

It is quite likely that some of the legislators who are opposed to off-track betting are opposed to gambling of any kind. Their opposition may be religious. Such objections are based on personal morality that must be respected. Others, we fear, have offered their opposition without first becoming familiar with the issue.

Some, we are confident, have never attended a horse or greyhound race. These legislators' lack of familiarity with the facilities, and their standards for cleanliness and professionalism, and the state's role in monitoring wagering, likely contributes greatly to their opposition.

It is time for Oregon's participation in wagering for greyhounds and horses to be consistent with its participation in the Oregon Lottery.

Off-track betting parlors should be allowed.



Repeat 'Come visit, don't stay' message

A fellow I know named Bowen Blair Jr. wrote a letter to the editor Saturday that set me to thinking. That's how I ended up in a purple posy patch pondering the future of Oregon.

Blame it on Blair. He wrote about how tired he was of the cliché that Oregon's economic ills can be traced to the late Gov. Tom McCall's remark, "Come visit, but for heaven's sake, don't stay."

Blair pointed out that he and probably many others came to Oregon 10 years ago precisely because of the governor's remark. "It indicated, quite accurately, that Oregon was a very special place," Blair wrote in his letter to The Oregonian.

He went on to point out that tourism is now Oregon's second-largest industry. A similar remark made today by Gov. Neil Goldschmidt, he said, would do more to bring tourists here than welcome signs at the border or a \$1 million advertising budget.

Now some people may wish that Blair hadn't defied the governor and come to Oregon a decade ago. As executive director of Friends of the Columbia River Gorge, he has been making plenty of mischief. Blair is



the fellow who camped out in Washington and haunted Congress until it passed the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Act. There are people in Corbett living under the new rules of the scenic area who wish he'd stayed away.

But Blair is right. Oregon is a special place.

I still remember listening to a Washington, D.C., cab driver back in the McCall years. Learning we were from Oregon, he said wistfully, "I heard what your governor said. Oregon must be wonderful. I'd like to see it someday."

Reverse psychology. Forbidden fruit. Playing hard to get. But it only works if there really is a treasure beneath the coyness. We believed we had a treasure during the McCall years. We protected it by passing bottle bills and land-use planning acts and cleaning our rivers.

Saturday morning after reading Blair's letter I went to West Linn to a hidden place off Walnut Street. There the camas bloom in a secret meadow. It isn't really secret. The Nature Conservancy has owned the Camassia Natural Area for 25 years, but it is a wild place so perfect that each person who sees it believes he is the first.

A meadow. Big rocks all furry with lichen. A river of purple camas lilies flowing among the rocks in color so vivid it makes your eyes ache. Splashes of pink flowers for contrast. And brassy swatches of yellow Scotch broom to add an edge to the soft pastel prettiness.

I sat in the middle of it thinking how special Oregon is and noticed that you could see from that wild, perfect place the plumes of steam from the paper mill at Oregon City. I remembered how that mill, and many others, cleaned up their acts so salmon would return to the

Willamette River. Somewhere along the way environment has become a bad word. When the recession hit, the timber industry went bad and some of us took pay cuts or lost our jobs. We scratched out the word environment and substituted economy.

In these days of Oregon Comeback, when we compete for electronics plants like merry-go-round riders reaching for the brass ring, you don't hear much talk of environment. People say the camas plants will have to take care of themselves until we bring back payrolls. That we have to compete with Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area. That we will worry about the environment when we get back on our economic feet. But I worry that when that happens the camas will be crushed beneath those feet.

Maybe Blair is right. Maybe instead of being part of the crowd clamoring at the doors of industrial tycoons, we should stand back a little and say, "Hey, we're a special place and we're looking for a few good industries to help us keep it that way. Otherwise, come visit, but for heaven's sake don't stay."

Letters to the editor

Builders Club says thank you

The members of the Builders Club of Boring Upper Grade School would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the following people, organizations and businesses who contributed in various ways to this year's very successful Boring Easter Egg Hunt.

They include: Bill Boring, Bowman's Thriftway in Gresham, the Dragon Deli Restaurant, McCall Country Store, Boring Barber Shop, Vanport Manufacturing, Gresham "Early Risers" Kiwanis Club, Country Video, Clackamas County Bank-Boring branch, the Hair Mill, the Garden Center and the Boring Fire District.

Randy L. Gould
Builders Club advisor

Policy on letters

Letters to the editor should be typed, double-spaced and signed. An address and telephone number should also be provided, although only the name of the letter writer and the city or area he is from will be published.

Letter writers may also wish to include a title or office held if it is appropriate considering the subject matter of the letter.

The news deadline of noon Tuesday

is also the deadline for letters to the editor.

Letters should be accurate, free of libelous remarks and in good taste. This newspaper attempts to publish all letters it receives from area residents.

We reserve the right to edit letters to conform to style guidelines or for length. Letters should be 300 words long.

Where to write

State Representative Bob Shprack, D-Dist. 23, 22610 Forest Park Rd., Beavercreek, Ore., 97004. 631-3817. Or: State Capitol, Room H288, Salem, Ore., 97310. 1-800-332-2313.

State Senator Bob Kintigh, D-Dist. 14, 38865 E. Cedar Flat Road, Springfield, 97478. 746-1842.

Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Oregon, 711 Hart Building, Washington, D.C., 20510. 202-224-3753. Portland office phone 221-3386.

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Oregon, 259 Russell Building, Washington, D.C.,

20510. 202-224-5244. Portland office phone 221-3370.

Rep. Denny Smith, R-5th Dist., 1213 Longworth Building, Washington, D.C., 20515. 202-225-5711. Salem office phone (toll free) 800-452-7889.

Legislative access in Oregon: 1-800-327-7389. One may call this number and ask to be connected to any state legislator's office.

Oregon Legislative status number: 1-800-332-2313. One may call this number to learn the status of bills pending in the Oregon Legislature.

Telephone link keeps operators busy

by JACK ZIMMERMAN
Associated Oregon Industries

Beneath the House wing of the Capitol Building in Salem is a tiny room from which two efficient women provide a telephonic link between the Legislature and the rest of Oregon.

It's the voice of either Janie Dover or Sheila Rutledge you hear when you dial 1-800-332-2313, the 64th Assembly's toll-free number which provides the public with the latest information on the status of individual pieces of legislation making their way through the process.

A one-time fire and police dispatcher from Silverton, Dover is in the midst of her third session answering questions about the legislature. No stranger to the process herself, Rutledge retired just a year ago after 15 years as a telephone operator for the state.

Together, they form a team that is fielding between 300 and 400 calls daily from folks from all over Oregon who are curious for a variety of reasons about what's going on in the Capitol.

They also respond to callers who should have directly dialed

1-800-327-7389, the number people can call if they want to talk directly with their Legislator on a call-back basis.

Both numbers are part of an extensive Legislative Information Service designed to expand public participation in the biennial exercise that repeals, amends and creates laws by which we are governed.

The bill-status service provided by Dover and Rutledge also enables citizens to order copies of individual bills under consideration. Those requests are forwarded to the Legislative Distribution Center, where workers mail single copies free to those requesting them.

All are part of an information service that has evolved since the late 1950s and has included rules calling for public hearings on all measures, expanded hearing room facilities in the Capitol and additional space for reporters covering proceedings for the state's newspapers, radio and television stations.

The phone service began in 1973 and has been a fixture in its present state since 1977. Queries to operators that year numbered approximately 50,000 and as many as 597 on a single day. In 1979 total calls dipped to

about 30,000 with 467 recorded on the busiest day. The record-long seven month session in 1981 provoked 38,404 calls and a peak of 341 on a single day. In '83 the number dropped again to 33,318, but jumped to 516 on the busiest day. The 1985 session, shortest since 1977, saw total calls rise to 34,193 and the busiest day (June 14) logged 491 calls just a week before final adjournment.

Although Dover suspected the pace of this session had slackened a little from the pace of the '85 session, records show 20,961 calls after 14 weeks this year, compared with 17,605 at about the same time two years ago.

That phenomenon likely is attributed to Dover's experience that she quickly admits build each session she's on the job. That's not the only experience with the legislative process but familiarity with the facilities and equipment at hand, also.

Both Rutledge and Dover can access computer screens that provide them almost instantly with the status of any of the nearly 2,700 different measures currently being considered by lawmakers. They also have copies of printed booklets that describe

measures by subject matter — a big help if callers are not aware of the specific number assigned to each bill, resolution and memorial introduced each session.

A new tool this year — a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) — enables the two operators to "converse" via printouts with the hearing impaired. And a bill is under consideration this session to make more of the devices available to deaf people.

Dover reports special excitement this session occurred when a news team from public television's channel 10 did a feature on the service they provide. Aside from that, the job is relatively routine — enlivened mostly by callers directing their displeasure about one issue or another to the innocent providers of information.

Both Dover and Rutledge display uncommon patience with callers and either ameliorate the upset by explaining away any misconceptions or referring callers to the Legislature's call-back service so they can deliver their messages where it will do the most good.

by Adam Kraft

Bobcats

