

# Michael Veitch: Some legislators feel there is hope for Aqueduct

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Gary Pretlow, who serves as chairman of the Assembly Racing and Wagering Committee in the New York legislature, is that rare Albany lawmaker who gets it when it comes to the thoroughbred industry.

Last week, as reported on the Blood Horse magazine website, Pretlow supported Aqueduct Race Track when commenting on the proposed convention center on the property.

The Genting Resorts World company, which operates the Aqueduct slots parlor, and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo recently agreed to the proposal, which threatens the survival of the track that has served the industry so well since 1894.

And it appears that this discussion included only Genting and the Governor.

Assemblyman Pretlow stated his fear that closing Aqueduct would mean the end of winter racing, the season which means a great deal to many in the state industry.

“As it stands now,” he said, “I don’t see Aqueduct shutting down.”

I hope Pretlow is right.

In his speeches on issues of the day, Gov. Cuomo likes to call on our state's former nickname as the “Empire State.”

I would think if he cared about thoroughbred racing, that he would support the long history of Aqueduct, Belmont and Saratoga as the premier circuit in the United States.

Regarding the state industry, bills in both houses of the state legislature support bankruptcy protection for Suffolk County Off-Track Betting.

They were introduced and referred to the respective committees on Friday.

It is nice that these bills recognize the jobs provided by Suffolk County OTB, and that protection could eventually mean the organization's \$1 million owed to the New York Racing Association might be paid.

But the advocacy for Suffolk County OTB strikes me as an example of what is wrong in this state when it comes to racing.

At this early stage of the 2012 legislative session, we have a situation which could lead to the closure of Aqueduct, that very institution upon which Suffolk County OTB is able to do business.

Sort of like protecting the wick and not the wax.

There it is, my friends.

The priorities of state government do not focus on the fan base, wagering, jobs both on and off the track, related services, simulcast outlets, quality of racing and the like that Aqueduct provides.

Instead, the focus is on protecting the organization that feeds on Aqueduct.

Hansen to Return Sunday

Hansen, winner of the Breeders' Cup Juvenile and the Eclipse Award as champion of his class for 2011, is slated to return to action this Sunday in the Holy Bull Stakes at Gulfstream Park.

The Grade 3 event at one mile carries a juicy purse of \$400,000.

The unbeaten Hansen worked five furlongs in a swift 59 4/5 seconds this past Sunday morning at Gulfstream.

Algorithms and Consortium are expected opponents in a small field; both are sons of Travers Stakes winner Bernardini.

They finished 1-2 in a Gulfstream Park allowance at 6-1/2 furlongs on Dec. 16.

Algorithms had not been out since breaking his maiden on June 3 at Belmont, and defeated Consortium by a length in a swift 1:15 2/5 for the distance.

Consortium broke his maiden on Nov. 16 at Aqueduct.

However, there is \$400,000 in graded money on the line in this prep for the Kentucky Derby

Hansen has yet to resemble the immortal Hindoo, yet a field of only four or five is expected at this writing.

This is another example of what irritates racing fans.

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