



From the EXECUTIVE CORNER



ROBYN BLACK

CTBA LOBBYIST

A BOLDER PATH FORWARD

In his 16th – and final – State of the State address on Jan. 25, Governor Jerry Brown called on legislators, stating the “bolder path is still our way forward.” In his 31-minute speech to a joint session of the legislature, he looked back on his many accomplishments and made clear there is much work to be done. He reminded the body that his most significant accomplishments were often only achieved with bi-partisan support – a reminder to us all that we must be bold and work with all gaming stakeholders on this path forward.

In some four months the United States Supreme Court will rule on New Jersey’s federal Professional and Amateur Sports Betting Protection Act (PASPA) appeal. Many expect the high court to concur with the petitioners, which could open the door for other states to pass authorizing legislation. Should that occur, expect everyone to rush to the legislature to protect and or expand their piece of the potential sports-betting pie.

Also in the next four months, racing will come into focus for many who often forget the sport once the Triple Crown runs its course. It’s time for us to be bold. There are 34 members on the Governmental Organization Committee, which oversees gaming. We need to get them next to a horse, and we need to remind

them of the importance of breeding and racing. We need to stay out front and remind them racing is sports wagering. They must stand with racing if they want it to continue in California. We have several new legislators on the policy committee (in part due to the fallout from sexual harassment scandals). We need to educate them.

The men and women represented by the racing unions will be very important in making sure any new legislation protects the interests of the brick-and-mortar establishments where they work and expands their opportunities. The dedicated people who work on California’s Thoroughbred farms need to be heard. We must work together to protect our future.

Tribal casinos and cardrooms will certainly be at the table, and, as of now, they will likely disagree on who could offer sports wagering, at least in California. Currently, these two gaming interests are battling over what the tribes view as illegal house banking by cardrooms, something strictly prohibited by Proposition 1A. This battle will certainly spill over to any sports wagering. High-tech companies might fight for inclusion, and professional and college sports will also advocate for their interests. We need to work now to build a coalition of like-minded interests and begin to educate policy makers be-

fore June. Internally, we need to have serious discussion regarding how any racing piece would look.

Like any good bet a horseplayer would make, we need to do our homework, study the field, hope for a great break, and then hope for a safe trip. The Supreme Court has a couple of months, and the outcome is by no means certain. But in the event the door opens, we need to make sure we are prepared for the possibility that California might authorize sports wagering.

The CTBA will also closely watch new bills introduced before the legislative deadline next month and advocate on behalf of breeders. Gaming is not the only issue impacting your bottom line. Animal welfare and labor issues will be watched closely as the new bills are introduced.

Talk to your legislators. Remind them that California is the only major racing state that does not allow alternative gaming to supplement purses. We are a \$2.5 billion industry that employs more than 50,000 people. We are agriculture, gaming, open space, and tourism. We are part of the storied history of California.

The governor’s great-grandfather, August Schuckman, sailed to America in 1849 on a ship named *Perseverance*. We too, will persevere with hard work, homework, knowing the field, and a little luck. **CTB**