



*From the EXECUTIVE CORNER*



ROBYN BLACK

CTBA LOBBYIST

# MEETING THE CHALLENGE

**“Our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant, and to face the challenge of change.”** —MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Tim Layden wrote and narrated a story for NBC before the Kentucky Derby on the recent equine deaths, which caused so much heartbreak for the people who love and care for racehorses and the public who loves them too. He wanted to address the fundamental truths the racetrack teaches us. He said, “A Thoroughbred racehorse in flight is a miracle. A giant creature on tiny legs dancing over the ground. Speed and power distilled into a natural poetry. There is nothing else like it on Earth.”

But like so many other sports, racing can be very dangerous. And we have to ask ourselves, are we doing our best to take care of our equine and human athletes? What about our fans?

California is now leading the way on racing reforms. Opinions may vary and we can agree to disagree, but change is necessary if we want to see these magnificent equine athletes continue to run and compete.

We are incredibly fortunate to have leadership at the California Horse Racing Board that is embracing change while providing a steady hand and well-reasoned rulemaking. They have reassured

the critics that we are taking the issue incredibly serious. We have legislators that support our farms, our owners, our workers, and our tracks. The instincts to react with swift actions in Sacramento have instead shown a desire to get answers, with two supportive chairmen who share our heartbreak and our desire to do everything they can to protect the horses and the sport.

The chairmen, Senator Bill Dodd and Assemblyman Adam Gray, amended a bill in April to authorize the CHRB, at any time, upon a vote of at least four members, to immediately suspend a license to conduct a horse racing meeting to protect the health and safety of horses and riders. The bill is Senate Bill 469, and it passed the Senate on May 9 with a vote of 38-0.

The two chairmen were scheduled to hold a joint hearing on horse racing May 22 to discuss the response from racing following the tragic equine deaths. Doug Burge of the CTBA planned to attend, along with others in the industry, to discuss the breeders' perspective as well as the importance of racing in the state.

We continue to maintain a dialog with animal activists and listen to their con-

cerns. We continue to discuss medications, crops, rules, and what the public expects from an industry that loves their horses. CTBA has played a very significant role with one group in particular that was taking aim at racing in the form of a ballot measure to ban the sport. In large part, due to our efforts and those of CHRB Chairman Chuck Winner and Santa Anita, we believe the proponents are satisfied with racing's efforts to make the sport as safe as possible.

In mid-May, Burge, John Harris, and I attended an event for the Maddy Institute in Sacramento attended by legislative leadership and Governor Gavin Newsom. It was incredibly encouraging for our governor to come over and let us know, particularly speaking to John, that he supports racing and the rich historical role racing has played in California. Not wanting to quote what was a private conversation, just know we all felt a whole lot better knowing we have Gavin Newsom watching and supporting our response to this heartbreaking set of events. We will continue to meet the challenge, and we appreciate lawmakers, rulemakers, and the governor working with us. **CTB**