

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND FIFTEEN

—
H.P. 705 - L.D. 1022

An Act To Protect the Future of Harness Racing

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, this legislation needs to take effect before the expiration of the 90-day period to provide funding as soon as possible to ensure the continuation of racing if a commercial track closes; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 8 MRSA §267-A, sub-§2, ¶¶B and C, as enacted by PL 2007, c. 539, Pt. G, §6 and affected by §15, are amended to read:

B. All fees collected by the commission pursuant to ~~section~~ sections 271, 275-D and 279-A; ~~and~~

C. Any funds allocated or appropriated to the operating account; and

Sec. 2. 8 MRSA §267-A, sub-§2, ¶D is enacted to read:

D. Any funds deposited in the operating account pursuant to section 299, subsection 3.

Sec. 3. 8 MRSA §299, sub-§§3 and 4 are enacted to read:

3. Track closure distribution. Notwithstanding subsection 2, if a commercial track ceases operation and is not immediately replaced by a commercial track in the same region that is owned by the same owner as the commercial track that ceased operation, all amounts credited to the fund established by this section must be disbursed to the remaining commercial tracks and to agricultural fair licensees that conduct live racing

based on days raced during extended meets up to a maximum of 100 days raced during extended meets per year and until such time as a new commercial track begins operation. The payment to a commercial track or agricultural fair is determined by dividing the amount in the fund by 150 and multiplying the result by the number of days raced by that commercial track or agricultural fair. An agricultural fair must receive its payment on May 30th before extended meets are held based on assigned dates for extended meets for that agricultural fair. An adjustment must be made no later than the January 30th following the extended meets that results in payment to an agricultural fair based on days actually raced during extended meets by that agricultural fair. Any amount remaining in the fund on January 30th after payments are made to commercial tracks and agricultural fairs must be transferred to the operating account of the commission under section 267-A.

For the purposes of this subsection, "region" is determined by measuring a distance of 50 miles from the center of the racing track along the most commonly used roadway, as determined by the Department of Transportation, drawing a circle around the center of the racing track using that 50-mile measurement and excluding those municipalities or unorganized territories that do not have boundaries contained entirely by that circle.

4. Natural disaster exception. If the commission determines that a commercial track is unable to conduct harness racing due to a natural disaster and that the commercial track licensee cannot immediately relocate to another venue, the commercial track licensee may be allowed up to 6 months to repair, rebuild or relocate at the discretion of the commission and, if the commercial track licensee repairs, rebuilds or relocates within the time frame allowed, the commission may authorize the commercial track licensee to again receive distributions in accordance with subsection 2. If the commercial track licensee is unable to repair, rebuild or relocate during this 6-month time frame due to circumstances that are determined by the commission to be outside of the control of the commercial track licensee, the commission may grant a reasonable extension beyond 6 months. During any time that is granted by the commission under this subsection to the commercial track licensee in order to repair, rebuild or relocate, the distribution formula established under subsection 3 must be in effect.

Sec. 4. 8 MRSA §1036, sub-§2, ¶H, as amended by PL 2011, c. 358, §4, is further amended to read:

H. Four percent of the net slot machine income must be forwarded by the board to the Treasurer of State, who shall credit the money to the Fund to Encourage Racing at Maine's Commercial Tracks, established in section 299; ~~however, the payment required by this paragraph is terminated when all commercial tracks have obtained a license to operate slot machines in accordance with this chapter, in which case, that 4% of the net slot machine income must be credited to the General Fund as undedicated revenue;~~

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.