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Gambling Alert - April 4, 2023



PUSH FOR 'RACINO'

Developers eye new harness racing track in Richton Park as Hawthorne plan stalls.

A group of investors says they're ready to trot out a new harness racetrack and casino in the far south suburbs that would provide a much-needed whip to Illinois' struggling horse racing industry — but they need state lawmakers to lift the starting gate.

Prospective partners in the newly formed Greenway Entertainment Group LLC envision a “first-class racino destination” with 1,200 slot machines just off Interstate 57 in Richton Park, and they say they can lock up the \$350 million needed to make it a reality.

There's just one thing reining in their proposal: state law allows Hawthorne Race Course —the Chicago area's only surviving track — to veto any potential new track within 35 miles of their storied 132 - year - old grandstand in Stickney.

“They're blocking other viable projects,” said Roy Arnold, the former president of the shuttered Arlington International Racecourse who's part of the Greenway bid. “We want to make

this industry sustainable and the clock is ticking.”

The veto provision was negotiated as part of a statewide gambling expansion law passed in 2019 that allowed existing tracks to add casino games and authorized a new harness racetrack to open in the south suburbs. The expansion, pushed by Gov. J.B. Pritzker to help fund his signature \$45 billion infrastructure improvement plan, also added six new casinos and introduced sports betting.

A bill introduced in Springfield last month by state Sen. Patrick Joyce would eliminate Hawthorne’s veto power this summer, opening the door for the Greenway group to apply to break ground on a track in the Essex Democrat’s district. [READ](#)

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