

Horse racing is hot topic at Jefferson County Chamber's legislative forum

December 4, 2015

BY KATIANN MARSHALL

CHARLES TOWN - Republican and Democratic state legislators were united in expressing support for the horse racing industry during a town hall-style forum held Thursday afternoon at the Hollywood Casino at Charles Town races.

The forum, hosted by the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce, was designed to address topics that are likely to be debated during the state legislature's next session, which begins Jan. 13.

Sen. Herb Snyder (D-16th), Del. Jill Upson (R-65th), Del. Paul Espinosa (R-66th) and Del. Stephen Skinner (D-67th) were all in attendance and made up the legislative panel. All chamber members in attendance were able to submit questions to be answered and discussed.

Article Photos



Journal photo by Katiann Marshall

Del. Stephen Skinner, center, speaks at Thursday's legislative forum in Charles Town.

The future of horse racing was a popular topic during Thursday's forum. Espinosa expressed his overwhelming support for the industry, saying his family has had ties to racing for many years.

The threat to the industry derives from a decrease in purse funds. According to the legislators, horse racing is a driving economic force in Jefferson County and it employs 14 percent of the county's workforce.

Upson spoke about her hopes to return money to the industry and Skinner agreed, but said it would be difficult due to the legislators "already having their hands in the pot." He said he will try to stand to stop the devastation to the industry from going any further.

Snyder voiced his frustration about recent developments pertaining to horse racing in West Virginia.

"Clearly what has already happened is serious, serious damage," said Snyder. "Why would anyone want to come here and buy a farm, much less put down millions of dollars for a breeding operation, and now some who are in that business want to leave or already are leaving, because of uncertainty at the hands of the West Virginia Legislature.

"This wasn't created by national or international forces. This is at the hands and the actions of the legislature. Obviously you can see I care about that, because it's wrong. What they are doing to this industry and to Jefferson County is just dead wrong."

Snyder encouraged everyone in the audience to stand with him in fighting to protect the horse racing industry and its impact on Jefferson County.