

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

**BILL #:** [CS/HB 881](#)

**TITLE:** Pari-Mutuel Wagering

**SPONSOR(S):** Anderson

### Committee References

[Industries & Professional Activities](#)

10 Y, 5 N, As CS

**COMPANION BILL:** [SB 1564](#) (DiCeglie)

**LINKED BILLS:** None

**RELATED BILLS:** None

[Commerce](#)



## SUMMARY

### **Effect of the Bill:**

The bill removes live racing requirements for thoroughbred permitholders under certain conditions beginning in 2030, and requires such permitholders to provide the Florida Gaming Control Commission (Commission) with notice prior to ending live racing.

The bill allows the lease of certain pari-mutuel facilities within 50 miles of the licensed premises of the lessee.

### **Fiscal or Economic Impact:**

The bill may have an indeterminate fiscal impact on state government and the private sector. The extent to which thoroughbred permitholders will elect to conduct live racing is unknown.

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## ANALYSIS

### **EFFECT OF THE BILL:**

#### **Live Racing Requirements**

The bill removes live racing requirements, under certain conditions, for certain thoroughbred permitholders who apply for a [pari-mutuel wagering](#) operating [license](#). (Section 1)

The bill provides that a thoroughbred permitholder that does not conduct live racing:

- Retains its permit;
- Is a pari-mutuel facility;
- If such permitholder has been issued a [slot machine license](#), the facility where such permit is located:
  - Remains an eligible slot machine facility;
  - Continues to be eligible for a slot machine license; and
  - Is exempt from thoroughbred horse racing purses and awards agreement requirements, and slot machine gaming area requirements;
- Is eligible, but not required, to be a guest track; and
- Remains eligible for a [cardroom license](#). (Section 1)

The bill requires thoroughbred permitholders to give notice prior to ending live racing and to continue to offer a full schedule of live racing until the end of such notice period. The notice cannot be made prior to July 1, 2027, and the term of the notice must ensure that live racing continues for at least three (3) years after the date of the notice. Thus, the earliest date that a thoroughbred permitholder may elect to end live racing is July 1, 2030. The permitholder is also required to give notice when relocating under to [s. 550.3345, F.S.](#), or [s. 550.475, F.S.](#), with authorization by the Commission in accordance with [s. 550.054, F.S.](#) (Section 1)

#### **Change of Location of a Thoroughbred Horse Racetrack**

**STORAGE NAME:** h0881a.IPA

**DATE:** 1/14/2026

The bill revises the process for changing the location of a thoroughbred horse racetrack, removing the current requirement to hold a referendum election in order to relocate in the same county or, to a different county, to instead allow the Commission to authorize the change in location regardless of voter approval. (Section [2](#))

### **Escheated Thoroughbred Horse Permits**

The bill removes the authority of the Commission to reissue escheated thoroughbred horse permits for failure of the permitholder to pay the required tax on handle for live performances. (Section [3](#))

### **Limited Thoroughbred Racing Permits**

For a limited thoroughbred permit under [s. 550.3345, F.S.](#), the bill revises the authority for the not-for-profit corporation that holds such permit to move the location of the permit to another location in the same county, to instead allow the permit to be moved to a county that has previously authorized pari-mutuel wagering. The bill also revises one of the designating authorities of the board of directors of the not-for-profit corporation to require the Commission to appoint four of the members instead of the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' Association. (Section [4](#))

### **Lease of Pari-Mutuel Facilities**

The bill entitles any permitholder to lease the facilities of another permitholder within 50 miles. Currently, holders of valid pari-mutuel permits are only entitled to lease their facilities to holders of the same class permit within a 35 mile radius of each other. The bill includes thoroughbred training centers but does not define such. (Section [5](#))

The bill prohibits thoroughbred permitholders relocating pursuant to [s. 550.3345, F.S.](#), or [s. 550.475, F.S.](#), in accordance with [s. 550.054, F.S.](#), from operating a cardroom at a leased training center but does not define such. (Section [5](#))

The bill specifies that the lessor of a pari-mutuel facility that has been issued a slot machine license or a cardroom license remains an eligible facility as defined in [s. 551.102\(4\), F.S.](#) (Section [5](#))

### **Thoroughbred Racing Application Operating Days**

The bill clarifies that only thoroughbred permitholders who are required to offer live racing must file an application that specifies the number and dates of racing performances. (Section [6](#))

### **Effective Date**

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2026. (Section [8](#))

### **FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:**

#### **STATE GOVERNMENT:**

The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) has not estimated the potential impacts of the current bill. The bill may have an insignificant impact on state government revenues. It is unknown how many thoroughbred permitholders will elect to terminate live racing.

#### **PRIVATE SECTOR:**

Individuals and businesses associated with thoroughbred horse racing will experience an indeterminate impact associated with the election by thoroughbred permitholders to conduct or not conduct live racing. Removing live race requirements for such permitholders may reduce certain expenditures related to these activities.

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

#### Pari-mutuel Wagering

Since approximately 1931, pari-mutuel wagering activities have been authorized in Florida for jai alai, greyhound racing, and horseracing. These activities are overseen and regulated<sup>1</sup> by the Division of Pari-Mutuel Wagering (Division) at the Commission, which is housed within the Department of Legal Affairs, Office of the Attorney General.<sup>2</sup> The Commission issues permits and operating licenses for PMW activities. Only pari-mutuel wagering permitholders under certain conditions are authorized to conduct other gaming activities like operating a cardroom or operating slot machines at their facilities.

#### Live Racing Requirements

Currently, only thoroughbred permitholders are required to conduct live racing in order to operate other pari-mutuel wagering activities. For example, in order to hold a cardroom license, thoroughbred permitholders are required to run a certain number of live races each year.

Greyhound permitholders are prohibited from conducting live racing.

Jai alai permitholders, harness horse racing permitholders, and quarter horse racing permitholders have the option to conduct live racing or games but are not required to do so.<sup>3</sup>

A greyhound permitholder, jai alai permitholder, harness horse racing permitholder, or quarter horse racing permitholder that does not conduct live racing or games:<sup>4</sup>

- Retains its permit;
- Is a pari-mutuel facility as defined in s. [550.002\(23\), F.S.](#);
- Is eligible, but not required, to be a guest track, and if the permitholder is a harness horse racing permitholder, is eligible to be a host track for purposes of intertrack wagering and simulcasting pursuant to ss. [550.3551](#), [550.615](#), [550.625](#), and [550.6305](#), F.S.;
- Remains eligible for a cardroom license; and
- If previously issued a slot machine license, remains eligible for such license.

#### Pari-mutuel Wagering Permitting and Licensure

The Florida Pari-mutuel Wagering Act (Act)<sup>5</sup> provides specific permitting and licensing requirements for the pari-mutuel industry.<sup>6</sup> Permitholders apply for an operating license annually to conduct pari-mutuel wagering activities.<sup>7</sup> Certain permitholders are also authorized to operate cardrooms<sup>8</sup> and slot machines at their facility.<sup>9</sup>

Currently, there are three pari-mutuel operating licenses that were issued for fiscal year 2025-2026 to conduct live thoroughbred racing performances. These licenses and their locations include:<sup>10</sup>

- Gulfstream Park Racing Association Inc., operates at Gulfstream Park in Broward County.
- Gulfstream Park Thoroughbred After Racing Program, Inc., operates at Gulfstream Park in Broward County.

<sup>1</sup> From 1932 to 1969, Florida's pari-mutuel industry was regulated by the State Racing Commission. In 1970, the commission became a division within the Department of Business Regulation, which, in 1993, became DBPR.

<sup>2</sup> See ss. [16.71-16.716](#), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> S. [550.01215](#), F.S.(1)(b)1., F.S.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> See ch. [550](#), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> S. [550.054\(1\)](#), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> S. [550.0115](#), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> S. [849.086](#), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> S. [551.104](#), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Email from Henry Mahler, Director of Legislative Affairs, Florida Gaming Control Commission, RE: Thoroughbred Permitholders (Jan. 31, 2025).

- Tampa Bay Downs, Inc., operates at Tampa Bay Downs in Hillsborough County.

### **Slot Machine Licensing**

In order to apply to conduct [slot machine gaming](#) a permitholder must first obtain permission from the voters of the county where the applicant's facility is located by referendum as specified in s. [23, Art. X of the State Constitution](#).<sup>11</sup> Currently, slot machines are only authorized in eight licensed PMW facilities<sup>12</sup> located in Miami-Dade and Broward counties, and are also authorized by Compact on the Seminole Tribe of Florida's tribal property.<sup>13</sup>

Thoroughbred permitholders are required to conduct a full schedule of live racing, as defined in s. [550.002\(10\), F.S.](#) in order to maintain their slot machine license.<sup>14</sup>

### **Cardroom Licensing**

Currently, in order to operate a cardroom in this state a person is required to hold a valid cardroom license.<sup>15</sup>

In order to apply for a cardroom license an applicant must first obtain a majority vote of the governing body of the municipality or county the facility is located in.<sup>16</sup>

Municipalities are authorized to prohibit the establishment of a cardroom on or after July 1, 2021, within their jurisdiction. This does not apply to a licensed pari-mutuel permitholder who held an operating license for the conduct of pari-mutuel wagering for fiscal year 2020-2021 in the municipality's jurisdiction or to a cardroom that was previously approved by the municipality.<sup>17</sup>

A cardroom license may only be issued to a licensed pari-mutuel wagering permitholder, and operated at the same facility at which the permitholder is authorized to conduct pari-mutuel wagering activities.<sup>18</sup>

A pari-mutuel permitholder, other than a converted quarter horse to thoroughbred permitholder or a purchaser, transferee, or assignee holding a valid permit for the conduct of pari-mutuel wagering, may not be issued a license for the operation of a cardroom if the permitholder did not hold an operating license for the conduct of pari-mutuel wagering for fiscal year 2020-2021.<sup>19</sup>

In order for an initial cardroom license to be issued to a converted quarter horse to thoroughbred permitholder, the applicant must have requested, as part of its pari-mutuel annual license application, to conduct at least a full schedule of live racing.<sup>20</sup>

Currently, in order for a [cardroom license](#) to be renewed by a thoroughbred permitholder, it must run a certain number of races each year:

"conduct at least 90 percent of the total number of live performances conducted by such permitholder during either the state fiscal year in which its initial cardroom license was issued or the state fiscal year immediately prior thereto if the permitholder ran at least a full schedule of live racing or games in the prior year".<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> S. [551.104\(2\), F.S.](#)

<sup>12</sup> S. [551.104\(3\), F.S.](#)

<sup>13</sup> S. [551.101, F.S.](#)

<sup>14</sup> S. [551.104\(4\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

<sup>15</sup> S. [849.086\(5\), F.S.](#)

<sup>16</sup> S. [849.086\(16\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>17</sup> S. [849.086\(16\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>18</sup> S. [849.086\(5\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>19</sup> S. [849.086\(5\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

## **Change of Location of a Thoroughbred Horse Racetrack**

Current law prohibits a thoroughbred horse racing permit or license from being transferred, or reissued for purposes of changing the location of a thoroughbred horse racetrack; however, such change in location is allowed pursuant to certain conditions:<sup>22</sup>

- If the location is within the same county as the already licensed location, the county holds a referendum election and a majority of the electors voting on that question in such county vote in favor of the transfer of such license.
- If the location is not within the same county as the already licensed location, the county where the licensee is already licensed to conduct the race meeting and the desired county both hold a referendum election where a majority of the electors voting on that question vote in favor of the transfer of such license.

Each such referendum must be held in accordance with the electoral procedures for ratification of permits, as provided in [s. 550.0651, F.S.](#), the expense of which must be borne by the licensee requesting the transfer.<sup>23</sup>

## **Escheated Thoroughbred Horse Permits**

Currently, the tax on handle for thoroughbred horserace performances is 0.5 percent of handle per performance.<sup>24</sup> The permit of a thoroughbred permitholder who is conducting thoroughbred performances and who does not pay tax on handle for any such performances conducted during any 2 consecutive state fiscal years is void and may not be reissued unless such failure to operate and pay tax on handle was the direct result of fire, strike, war, hurricane, pandemic, or other disaster or event beyond the ability of the permitholder to control. Financial hardship does not constitute just cause for failure to operate and pay tax on handle.<sup>25</sup>

The Commission is authorized to reissue an escheated thoroughbred horse permit to a qualified applicant for the issuance of an initial permit without having to satisfy the referendum requirements for a pari-mutuel permit. As specified in the application and upon approval by the Commission, the new permitholder is authorized to operate a thoroughbred horse facility anywhere in the same county in which the escheated permit was authorized to be operated, notwithstanding the provisions of [s. 550.054\(2\), F.S.](#), relating to mileage limitations.<sup>26</sup>

## **Limited Thoroughbred Racing Permits**

Current law allows a holder of a quarter horse racing permit to, within 1 year after the effective date of this law, which became effective in 2009, to apply to the Commission for a transfer of the quarter horse racing permit to a not-for-profit corporation, designated by the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' Association, to request that the Commission convert the quarter horse racing permit to a permit authorizing the holder to conduct thoroughbred racing.<sup>27</sup>

The quarter horse racing permit nor its conversion to a limited thoroughbred permit are subject to the mileage limitation or the ratification election as set forth under s. 550.054(2) or [s. 550.0651, F.S.](#) After the conversion issuance of the initial license to conduct thoroughbred racing, the not-for-profit corporation is required to annually apply to the Commission for a thoroughbred racing license.<sup>28</sup>

Racing under the permit may take place only at the location for which the original quarter horse racing permit was issued, which may be leased by the not-for-profit corporation for that purpose; however, the not-for-profit corporation may, without the conduct of any ratification election pursuant to s. 550.054(13) or [s. 550.0651, F.S.](#),

<sup>22</sup> [S. 550.054\(13\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>23</sup> [S. 550.054\(13\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>24</sup> S. [550.09515\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>25</sup> S. [550.09515\(3\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

<sup>26</sup> S. [550.09515\(3\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

<sup>27</sup> S. [550.3345\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>28</sup> S. [550.3345\(2\), F.S.](#)

move the location of the permit to another location in the same county provided that such relocation is approved under the zoning and land use regulations of the applicable county or municipality.<sup>29</sup>

A converted permit and a license issued to the not-for-profit corporation under chapter 849 are not eligible for transfer to another person or entity.<sup>30</sup>

Unless otherwise provided, after conversion, the permit and the not-for-profit corporation are treated under the laws of this state as a thoroughbred permit and as a thoroughbred permitholder, respectively, with the exception of certain tax on handle and intertrack wagering requirements in ss. 550.09515(3) and [550.6308, F.S.](#)<sup>31</sup>

### **Lease of Pari-mutuel Facilities**

Holders of valid pari-mutuel permits for the conduct of any pari-mutuel wagering in this state are entitled to lease any and all of their facilities, as follows:<sup>32</sup>

- The lease may only be to another holder of a same class valid pari-mutuel permit;
- The permitholders must be located within a 35-mile radius of each other; and
- The lessee is entitled to a permit and license to conduct [intertrack wagering](#)<sup>33</sup> and operate its race meet<sup>34</sup> or [jai alai](#)<sup>35</sup> games at the leased premises.

### **Thoroughbred Racing Application Operating Days**

Currently, each thoroughbred permitholder is required to annually, during the period commencing January 15 of each year and ending February 4 of the following year, file in writing with the Commission its application to conduct one or more thoroughbred racing meetings during the thoroughbred racing season commencing on the following July 1.<sup>36</sup>

Each application must specify the number and dates of all performances that the permitholder intends to conduct during that thoroughbred racing season.<sup>37</sup>

- On or before April 15 of each year, the Commission is required to issue a license authorizing each permitholder to conduct performances on the dates specified in its application.
- Up to March 28 of each year, each permitholder may request and must be granted changes in its application to conduct performances; but thereafter, as a condition precedent to the validity of its license and its right to retain its permit, each permitholder is required to operate the full number of days authorized on each of the dates set forth in its license.

<sup>29</sup> S. [550.3345\(2\)\(d\), F.S.](#)

<sup>30</sup> S. [550.3345\(2\)\(e\), F.S.](#)

<sup>31</sup> S. [550.3345\(3\), F.S.](#)

<sup>32</sup> S. [550.475, F.S.](#)

<sup>33</sup> S. [550.002\(16\), F.S.](#), defines “intertrack wager” or “intertrack wagering” as a particular form of pari-mutuel wagering in which wagers are accepted at a permitted, in-state track, fronton, or pari-mutuel facility on a race or game transmitted from and performed live at, or simulcast signal rebroadcast from, another in-state pari-mutuel facility.

<sup>34</sup> S. [550.002\(19\), F.S.](#), defines “meet” or “meeting” as the conduct of live racing or jai alai, or wagering on intertrack or simulcast events, for any stake, purse, prize, or premium.

<sup>35</sup> S. [550.002\(17\), F.S.](#), defines “jai alai” or “pelota” as a ball game of Spanish origin played on a court with three walls.

<sup>36</sup> S. [550.5251\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

**RECENT LEGISLATION:**

YEAR	BILL #/SUBJECT	HOUSE/SENATE SPONSOR(S)	OTHER INFORMATION
2025	<a href="#">CS/HB 1467</a> - Gambling	Snyder, Anderson / Burgess	The bill passed the House but died in the Senate.

**OTHER RESOURCES:**[Florida Gaming Control Commission](#)[Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services: Florida Horse Industry](#)[Florida Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association](#)[Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association](#)[Gulfstream Park](#)[Tampa Bay Downs](#)

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**BILL HISTORY**

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
<a href="#">Industries &amp; Professional Activities Subcommittee</a>	10 Y, 5 N, As CS	1/14/2025	Anstead	Thompson
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	The amendment removed the provision that exempts certain permitholders from cardroom licensure, fees, and other tax requirements.			
<a href="#">Commerce Committee</a>				

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THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.

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