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Greyhounds grab spotlight at state Capitol

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Twiggy, a retired greyhound racing dog, stopped folks in their tracks around the state Capitol on Tuesday. Two greyhounds visited the Capitol as part of legislation that would create major changes for Florida's 80-year-old dog racing industry.

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Written by **Dave Heller**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- There was a clear example at the state Capitol on Tuesday showing one of the best ways to get the attention of people and politicians is to bring a couple of dogs inside the building.

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Two greyhounds named Twiggy and Johnnie grabbed the spotlight

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outside the House and Senate chambers.

The greyhounds are retired racing dogs. They made a trip to the Capitol as part of proposed legislation that would eliminate a state requirement that dog tracks offer a full schedule of live racing in order to operate card games.

Bill sponsors Sen. Maria Sachs and Rep. Dana Young call dog racing a dying business that no longer deserves to be propped up by nearly \$5 million in tax dollars a year.

They are pushing legislation to eliminate that state subsidy, as well as the requirement to run a minimum number of races each day.

"We need to remove these mandates. We need to stop propping up the greyhound racing industry and we need to let that industry stand or fall on its own. They're either going to have to come up with new and innovative ways to market their business if they choose to continue racing or they will fail," said Rep. Dana Young of Tampa.

Sen. Sachs said the amount of money gambled on dog racing has plummeted 57 percent over the past eight years and some tracks are cutting spending on animal care as a result.

"If we could put this money into things that we need such as education, it would prevent 108 teachers from being fired, 100 additional police officers a year, 95 firefighters a year, and 75 additional nurses. The money that we are putting into subsidizing a dying business would provide for this."

Sachs says it's time to let the market decide how many dog races should run each day.

The Florida Greyhound Association opposes the bill, saying it would kill jobs in the dog racing business.



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