

Editorial

Mayor Must Fight Harder With Albany To Fix OTB

Let us make it perfectly clear at the outset: the *Gazette* recommends that the city Off Track Betting Corporation (NYC OTB) should remain in business because it has proven in the past that it can make money for the city and it can continue to do so if most of its profits are not diverted.

As Mayor Michael Bloomberg pointed out last week, OTB brings in over \$1 billion annually in wagers and generates an annual operating profit of approximately \$125 million. So there should be some money in it for the cash strapped New York City government.

But, says the mayor, "The legislative mandates imposed by Albany have forced NYC OTB to make significant and increasing distributions to the racing industry—with the amount of these distributions based not on NYC OTB's profit, but on gross revenues."

According to mayor, since 2001 the additional requirements that have helped to put NYC OTB in a hole have been caps on customer charges, new regulatory fees, \$54 million to the New York Racing Association, which operates the state's three thoroughbred tracks, and—get this—"the requirement to continue to pay

fees to harness tracks, even if they are not operating".

The upshot of this sad story is that NYC OTB may run out of cash by June 2008, says the mayor, and he will not inject additional funds into its operation because he is having enough problems funding essential services. It is not surprising to us that Bloomberg, given his superior private sector financial successes and his management skills, would be the first to comprehend this broken business model that NYC OTB is forced to operate under.

The situation is so dire for NYC OTB, says the mayor, that if it runs out of cash by next June, he is not going to pump any city funds into a dead horse, and NYC OTB will just go out of business.

The mayor says frankly he's no great fan of OTB and has always had reservations about city government being involved in gambling. Since the city cannot and will not subsidize OTB, the state must provide the solution if OTB is to remain in business, the mayor said.

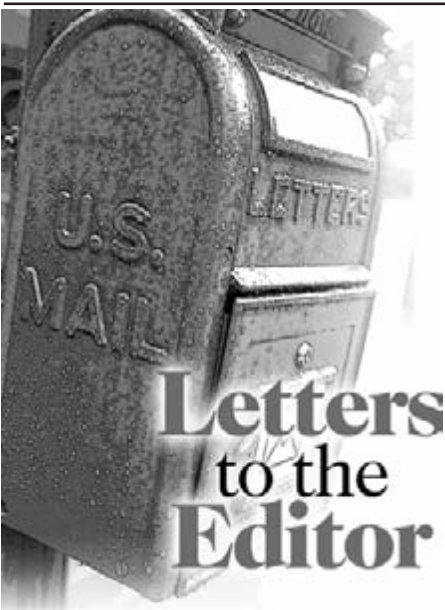
While we respect the mayor's honesty on this issue, and while we agree the city should not subsidize NYC OTB operations, given all the leaks in this sinking

ship—which were caused by conditions beyond its control—we still believe he should be putting up a stronger fight against Albany to make NYC OTB solvent.

It's clear that, given a chance to do its job, the beleaguered agency can make money and New York City government can benefit from it, as it did in times past before forces in Albany started to cripple its operations.

Since Albany created all the problems that are now plaguing OTB, it is up to the state legislature and Governor Eliot Spitzer to get at the root of the problem and put the program on a right course.

Officials at City Hall acknowledge that Ray Casey and his management team at NYC OTB have performed well in difficult circumstances. The mayor and his cabinet members point out that now is a propitious moment for Albany to place NYC OTB on a straight course because the legislature and the governor are presently deciding the future of racing in New York state and the future of NYC OTB must be a part of the discussions going on in the state capital.



Letters to the Editor

Obama's Time Not Now

To The Editor:

The 2008 presidential election is for the Democrats to lose. Gore forfeited the White House in 2000 by pandering during televised debates, refusing to campaign with President [Bill] Clinton and by foolishly defending attacks on his moral judgment. "Prevailing legal opinion" translated into voter rejection.

The evident hostility expressed by Sen[ator Barack] Obama towards [Senator] Hillary Clinton is creating a rift that will not easily heal. Obama may alienate sufficient numbers of independent voters to result in a Republican victory.

Obama has the promise of serving the nation for years to come. Without question, he will have the support to win the White House one day. Timing and patience do not appear to be on his side. By responding to his naked ambitions, Obama may damage himself within the Democratic Party and core primary voters, deny-

ing him forever the prize he is currently seeking.

Maturity is defined by postponing immediate gains for future benefits. By caving into his zealous lust for power, Obama is revealing that he is not yet suited for the presidency. Perhaps failure will serve him and the nation better by humbling a personality too sure of itself. The Senator is a national asset whose time to lead lies in the future.

Edward Horn
Baldwin, New York

Don't Kill Pigeons

To The Editor:

This is a protest against pending legislation to fine people \$1,000 who feed the pigeons. And against a reader's suggestion (in a local community paper) to pay \$1. for every dead pigeon or rat. These suggestions [are] coming out of a "kill mentality". The same "kill mentality" that has been in existence for centuries: if you don't like a particular group (be it human or animal)—kill them. These are not sane, humane, constructive ways to deal with the bird situation. Safe bird sanctuaries could be established where the pigeons could live in harmony with other birds, be fed and cared for, receive oral birth control (available to them) and other medical treatments. Sanctuaries [are] one sane way to go. Funding can be found for sane, decent programs, not only for birds, but homeless cats, dogs, etc., as well.

If the United States can send millions/billions of our dollars overseas (along with American jobs), politicians and private citizens can come up with the funds for sane programs and the jobs they would generate. There is a vibrant work force to tap into: our senior citizens, our homeless, and our younger adults. There would be loads of volunteers available, too.

Pigeons are maligned, displaced with no safe habitat. But these birds are beautiful, smart and

trusting. They are very family-oriented, which many people would do well to emulate. During World Wars I and II, carrier pigeons flew dangerous missions for our military, delivering secret messages in the midst of ongoing battles. Many of these faithful birds lost their lives and because of their bravery, human lives were saved: soldiers and private citizens. Pigeons were heroes! (So were the dogs used in wartime. Many of these beautiful dogs, gave their lives for their human friends and instead of allowing these hero dogs to go home, be adopted and live out their lives happily, after the war (as retired soldiers) a large number were euthanized by the military. So much for trusting humans!

I am tired of hearing pigeons called dirty. They are not dirty. They are birds and they poop!

Want to talk about being "dirty", let's look at humans:

- Those who blow their nose between their fingers on to the streets, dry their snotty germed hands on their clothes, handrails, then proceed to handle money, fresh produce, door knobs, and who shake hands with people, hold children's hands, etc., all the while spreading germs.

- Those who expectorate (spit) on the streets.

- Men and women urinating on the street. (I personally saw a lady covered head-to-toe in long garb go between parked cars, lift her long skirt and urinate).

- Dirty food carts and vendors who totally ignore the Board of Health's regulations.

- Restaurants/delicatessens/meat and fish stores who totally ignore the Board of Health's regulations.

- Supermarket shoppers who take perishable products out of their refrigerated cases, then decide not to purchase [them] and leave [them] lying on some shelf, causing the perishable item to go bad.

- Restaurants who throw their liquid waste into

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