

**2019 HHI Annual Meetings successful, well-attended**

***For Immediate Release***: March 4, 2019

Harness Horsemen International (HHI) wrapped up their annual meetings on Feb. 27 at the Embassy Suites Resort & Spa, Deerfield, Beach, Florida, following the HHI Awards Luncheon, where Salvatore DiMario (Dominic Frinzi Person of the Year), Foiled Again (Appreciation Award) and Chris Gooden (Hirt Media Award) were honored.

Highlights from the three (Feb. 25-27) days of meetings garnered some riveting presentations, including one by Joe Asher, CEO of William Hill USA, on the intricate details of Sports Wagering, as well as a Lobbying Panel Discussion led by the Pennsylvania HHA’s Bob Reeber, Esq. and Delaware SOA’s Rebecca Kidner, Esq., both veteran lobbyists who explained to the attendees the importance of horsemen being actively involved in the political process in their respective states’ General Assembly.

The plight of the Ontario Harness Horsemen’s Association (OHHA) was a primary topic of discussion among the HHI attendees, with OHHA Executive Director Brian Tropea relaying information on the attempt by Ontario Racing to disband the OHHA, who have represented the Ontario-based horsemen for 50 years, with a membership of more than 3,000 current members. HHI fully supports the OHHA and encouraged the attending members to pen letters to Ontario Racing in support of recognizing the OHHA and their role as a democratically elected organization representing the horsemen and their Board of Directors.

Each HHI-member association reported on the “state of the industry” within their jurisdictions, including the SBOA-NJ, who received a positive boost recently when the New Jersey legislature appropriated $100 million for both the Standardbred and Thoroughbred Garden State racing industries.

As well, Cliff Williamson of The American Horse Council and Mike Tanner, Executive Vice President of the United States Trotting Association (USTA) spoke on issues facing the horse racing industry in 2019, and HHI committees reported their status to the delegates with the decision made to return to this same Deerfield Beach venue in 2020.

Finally, the current HHI officers were all reelected to three-year terms, including: President Tom Lucento; First VP Kim Hankins; Second VP Tony Somone; Treasurer Andrew Markano; Secretary Sal DiMario; and At-Large Directors Mike Harant (PHAA), Tim Powers (Maine HHA), Jim Whelan (Ontario HHA), Tony Romano (SBOA-NJ).

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