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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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NEW EXECUTIVE BRINGS STRONG FINANCE-AUDITING CREDENTIALS

SACRAMENTO, CA – Richard “Bon” Smith, a certified financial manager who served as chief of audits with the California Department of Motor Vehicles, has been named assistant executive director of the California Horse Racing Board.

Smith, who previously worked 18 years in the California Department of Finance, where he rose to the management position of Supervising Finance Program Evaluator, is a certified public accountant. He has worked in state government 25 years.

As assistant executive director, Smith will coordinate and assist with the direct operations of the CHRB staff and play an important role in the state budgeting process. Smith will begin his new duties with the CHRB on November 13.

“Bon Smith has a strong background in finance, extensive experience in state government, and an interest in and appreciation of horse racing,” said Executive Director Ingrid Fermin. “He brings a valuable combination of knowledge, experience, and interests to the CHRB. The commissioners and staff welcome Bon to our industry.”

Smith, 56, received a bachelor’s degree in social science in 1972 from the University of California, Berkeley, and then earned teaching credentials at Cal State Hayward. But with teaching jobs difficult to find due to budget cutbacks following the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, Smith returned to school to study accounting. He joined the California Department of Water Resources’ internal audit shop in 1981, and then transferred to the Department of Finance in 1984. He moved to the DMV in 2002, where he consolidated and coordinated the entire department’s auditing function. In 2004, he headed the audit team of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s California Performance Review.

“My professional background is oversight, control, regulation,” said Smith. “That’s what the auditing process in the State of California is all about, especially in the Department of Finance, so I see this as a direct transfer of my skill set. The California Horse Racing Board has the responsibility to regulate and oversee all aspects of pari-mutuel operations. So, from the point of view that our responsibility as a state agency is to ensure a fair program, that’s where I come from.”

Smith actually worked within the horse-racing industry briefly about 20 years ago when simulcasting was being introduced in California and the Department of Finance sent in a team of auditors to make certain that proper auditing procedures were in place to protect the integrity of the wagering pools.

“We checked into the nuts-and-bolts auditing at Bay Meadows, reviewed event tabulation reports, that sort of thing. From day one, simulcasting was a tightly run program,” explained Smith. “I enjoyed my brief encounter with the professional side of horse racing. Not many fans have a chance to see that side of the sport. Then, when I learned the CHRB was looking for an assistant executive director, I couldn’t reach for the phone fast enough. The second I saw the bulletin, I said, ‘That’s me!’ This is my opportunity to see horse racing from an entirely different perspective.”

Smith is keenly aware of the public’s expectations and scrutiny of all aspects of horse racing – from the health and safety of horses to the decisions of the stewards and the discipline of licensees.

“At the DMV I was part of the disciplinary review committee,” explained Smith. “One of the things we wanted was consistency. The same should be true for the CHRB or any state agency. All of us in state government answer to the public. The public wants a clean operation. Having strict, enforceable rules protects everyone and ensures it’s run aboveboard.”

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