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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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A TRUE FAN JOINS THE BOARD

SACRAMENTO, CA – It's taken more than 30 years but persistence finally paid off last week for Jesse Choper when Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed the Berkeley law professor to the California Horse Racing Board.

Choper's credentials are impeccable. After graduating from law school, he served as a law clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren. He taught at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and the University of Minnesota Law School before joining the faculty at the University of California's Boalt Hall in 1965, where he served as dean for 10 years and continues to teach as the Earl Warren Professor of Public Law.

Choper also has been a visiting professor at Harvard Law School, lectured at major law conferences throughout the world, written several books and countless articles on the law, received numerous awards, and, well, the list goes on and on.

The one thing that's eluded him until now has been a seat on the CHRB, though it's not been for lack of trying. "I originally approached Jerry Brown's administration about 30 years ago," he explained, "and later Pete Wilson and Gray Davis. I was beginning to lose hope, but others urged me to keep trying. I'm really grateful to Governor Schwarzenegger for giving me this opportunity."

Actually, Governor Wilson did appoint Choper to the CHRB, but it was among 130 appointments he made just before he left office, which were immediately rescinded by Governor Davis. Choper's term on the CHRB lasted all of 36 hours. He kept trying.

Why horse racing? "I've loved the sport ever since a friend took me to Golden Gate Fields in the late 60s," he responded. "I was particularly fascinated by the challenge of handicapping, as well as the excitement of the horses coming down the stretch, and the whole atmosphere of the racetrack. I really like being there to see the horses run. That's why I've traveled regularly to all of the tracks in Northern California – the majors and all the fairs. It's worth the effort."

Choper even owned a small percentage of a few claiming horses with friends up until the early 80s. "One of them won some allowance races. Overall, I didn't lose very much," he said of the experience.

It's a wonder that Choper has time for horse racing. In addition to his duties at Cal, he often travels around the country lecturing on constitutional law and serves on a number of committees. And then there's sports.

"I'm Cal's faculty athletic representative to the Pac-10 and NCAA," he explained. "I'm responsible for compliance with the rules and looking out for the academic welfare of the student athletes. This involves going to many of the games. And I'm one of four people from Cal on the Pac-10 Council, so I attend four Pac-10 meetings a year."

Any time that Choper contributes to horse racing will be invaluable to the industry, according to CHRB Vice Chairman John Harris, who has known him for several years.

"I'm encouraged to see Jesse appointed to the Board," said Harris. "We're fortunate that someone with his knowledge and outstanding legal credentials has come along at a key time for the CHRB. His kind demeanor and true love of the sport will dramatically help the Board."

When asked about some of the critical problems facing horse racing today, Choper thought it best to delay commenting until after he attends his first meeting in May and spends more time studying the issues.

"Obviously, I'm aware of some of the major issues," said Choper. "When you go to the races with friends, you talk about the future locations of tracks in Northern California. You discuss medication for horses. You understand some of the problems."

"I am interested in racing from the standpoint of a fan and member of the public who plays horses. I also know it is an industry that has undergone enormous change. I'm not as familiar with racing in other parts of the country as I am with California, but I believe the problems are the same everywhere. There aren't enough fans at the live races. Inter-track wagering partly explains that. Whatever the reasons, it is important to turn things around. The sport and the industry ultimately depend on live racing. I don't know that you can return things to the way they were in the 30s and 40s, but nonetheless we have to do the best we can."

"In addition to the entertainment value, there are strong economic reasons to preserve and enhance horse racing in California. It provides an important tax base and it employs thousands of people. Horse racing deserves all of our efforts to help keep it going strong. That's my intent. I think it's a real challenge."

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