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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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BOARD CONSIDERS MANDATING SAFETY REINS

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Horse Racing Board will conduct a public hearing September 18 to consider mandating the use of safety reins at California racetracks in order to provide greater protection to riders. The public is encouraged to submit written comments on this proposal by September 8 and to attend the public hearing in Pomona.

On June 27, the Board approved for 45-day public notice a proposed rule to require the use of safety reins in racing and training in California. Safety reins contain an internal back-up cord connected to the bit, so that if the traditional outer reins break, the jockey or driver can still maintain control of the horse. Safety reins are strongly endorsed by the Jockeys' Guild, which helped draft legislation that became Section 19504 of the Horse Racing Law requiring the Board to require the use of safety reins if the Board determines they would provide jockeys and exercise riders greater protection from accidents and injuries than conventional reins.

Testimony by representatives of the Jockeys' Guild at that June 27 Board meeting focused on how traditional reins sometimes break from continuous wear and from manufacturing defects, placing jockeys at great risk, particularly when this occurs during a race. They demonstrated how safety reins contain an internal cord that is either looped or clipped to the bit, so if the outer reins break, the inner cord that is independently attached to the bit helps the jockey keep control.

The California Thoroughbred Trainers asked the Board to delay mandating safety reins until national standards are developed through laboratory testing. The CTT was especially concerned about determining the breaking strength of the inner cord, which they consider a safety issue for horses.

The Board elected to place the proposed rule out for public notice, and asked the various parties to submit additional information addressing the breaking strength of safety reins.

Written comments should be sent by e-mail to ColleenG@chrb.ca.gov or addressed to Colleen Germek, Regulation Analyst, California Horse Racing Board, 1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95825. The time for the start of the September 18 meeting at Fairplex Park will be posted on the CHRB website (www.chrb.ca.gov) at least 10 days beforehand. An audio link to the meeting will be available on the CHRB website.