



CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD

PRESS RELEASE

1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 263-6000
www.chrb.ca.gov

Mike Marten

(714) 240-1870
mikem@chrb.ca.gov

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SUMMARY OF CHRB ACTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS 2-26-2026

The California Horse Racing Board conducted a meeting Thursday, February 26, at the Hilton Hotel in Arcadia. Chairman Greg Ferraro chaired the meeting, joined by Vice Chair Oscar Gonzales and Commissioners Dennis Alfieri, Damascus Castellanos, Brenda Washington Davis, and Peter Stern.

The audio of this entire Board meeting is available on the CHRB Website (www.chrb.ca.gov) under the [Webcast](#) link, accessed through the Media Room tab. The agenda was short, just two main items dealing with 2026 dates allocations in Northern California, but the meeting went long, nearly three hours, with extensive public comment that can be heard via the archive link on the website.

The Board denied both requests for 2026 racing dates, one from the Tehama District Fair, which is a new applicant, and the other from the more familiar Humboldt County Fair. The commissioners rejected each request by the same 4-2 vote, but for different reasons.

Tehama has not had racing at its fair in more than 40 years, and as such the facility, located just south of Lake Shasta, has found it challenging to meet sanctioned race meet compliance standards. The CHRB sent safety steward Richard Lewis to Tehama to assess the facility. Lewis, who has an extensive background in racetrack management as well as CHRB safety matters, wrote a detailed analysis, which is available online in the meeting package, but in testimony Thursday he summarized his findings:

“They have no tote board,” began Lewis, and no jockeys room, no paddock, no racing office, no safety rail, and only 210 stalls. Given these needs as well as other operating, logistical, and financial concerns, both the Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC) and the California Thoroughbred Trainers (CTT)

organizations indicated they would not approve the required race-meet agreements at this time.

Tehama's dates request is from April 29 through May 26, so the Board would need to consider its meet application at the next CHRB meeting on March 11, and the deadline for submitting that application is next week on March 2. "Tehama is in no way, shape, or form ready to start a race meet," declared Chairman Ferraro. Commissioners Alfieri, Castellanos, and Stern joined him in rejecting the Tehama request, while Vice Chair Gonzales and Commissioner Davis voted in favor.

Next, Humboldt was back before the Board with another request for race dates, this time for four weeks from August 5 through September 1. The discussion of this request focused almost entirely on financial matters, though Vice Chair Gonzales earnestly attempted to shift that focus when he said, "not everything in life is reflected in the ledger," and he pointed to community involvement and family values as matters not easily quantified. Commissioner Davis joined him in support of the Humboldt request.

But most of the testimony from stakeholders and other commissioners kept the focus on dollars and cents, repeatedly referencing an estimated \$2 million that would be diverted from major racing interests in Southern California to finance a small meet in the far north. Speakers also reminded everyone of the costly failure of Golden State Racing at the Alameda County Fair in 2024 as evidence that thoroughbred and fair racing in the north has not been sustainable since the closing of the north's anchor track Golden Gate Fields in 2024.

TOC President Bill Nader and CTT President John Sadler both pointed out that many horses already have been moved out of California to race in jurisdictions with larger purses, and given the possibility that diverting money to Humboldt would result in purse reductions in Southern California, predicted it would only accelerate the exodus.

Commissioner Alfieri agreed when he commented, "We are finally doing so well in the south, but its fragile, so now is not the time to experiment." Three other commissioners agreed with him, again making the final vote 4-2.

As things now stand, there will not be any thoroughbred/fair racing in Northern California in 2026. However, the Board has allocated 2026 dates for harness racing at the Big Fresno Fair.