

JUDGE BLOCKS PROPOSED BAN ON DOG RACING

TALLAHASSEE --- A circuit judge on Wednesday knocked a greyhound-racing ban off the November ballot, calling the proposed constitutional amendment misleading and “outright trickeration.”

“Contrary to the words presented for consideration by the voters, the amendment would not end dog racing, nor would it eliminate wagering on dog racing,” Leon County Circuit Judge Karen Gievers wrote in her order.

“In short, proposed Amendment 13 is misleading and inaccurate and incomplete, while adding up to a ‘hide the ball,’ ‘fly a false flag’ and outright ‘trickeration,’ ” she wrote.

Supporters of the proposed constitutional amendment quickly said they will appeal the ruling.

The amendment was one of eight ballot measures placed on the Nov. 6 general-election ballot by the state Constitution Revision Commission, which meets every 20 years and has the unique authority to present proposed constitutional changes directly to voters.

The proposal sought to ban commercial greyhound racing in the state after Dec. 31, 2020. It was sponsored by Sen. Tom Lee, R-Thonotosassa, a member of the constitutional panel.

But Gievers said the ballot title and summary for the amendment were “clearly and conclusively defective.”

Gievers said the ballot information failed to inform voters that the actual amendment language would establish the “humane treatment of animals” as a “fundamental value” in the Constitution. She also said the language failed to describe the amendment’s impact on existing constitutional provisions that allowed slot machines at dog tracks in Broward and Miami-Dade counties contingent on live racing at the facilities.

“If the CRC (Constitution Revision Commission) wanted Florida voters to be able to rethink the relationship between live animal racing and the operation of slot machines, or to be able to adopt as a constitutional fundamental value the humane treatment of animals, the CRC could have included the appropriate language in the ballot and summary,” the judge wrote.

STATE GOES ALONG WITH EARLY VOTING RULING

TALLAHASSEE --- Secretary of State Ken Detzner has told a federal judge the state will comply with an order that struck down a policy barring early voting sites on college and university campuses.

But elections supervisors in Alachua, Leon and Hillsborough counties say it’s too late to secure early voting sites prior to the Aug. 28 primaries, and they’re not sure whether they can nail down on-campus sites before the November general election.

The issue stems from a 2014 advisory opinion by state Division of Elections Director Maria Matthews that advised elections supervisors that a 2013 law expanding early voting sites to a variety of public facilities didn’t apply to college or university locales.