

**Common Cause/NY**

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Part of a series of alerts to inform you about reform  
and ethics issues in New York government.

**Bulletin  
July/August '07**

**In this bulletin: The Money Race for Control Over New York's Racetracks • I Love an Ethical NY 2007 Awards**

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## **Race for New York's Horse Racing Franchise**

Three of New York State's largest horse racetracks are set to change management hands after December 31, 2007. For 52 years the New York Racing Association (NYRA), a registered nonprofit organization, has held tenure as the sole operator of the Belmont, Aqueduct, and Saratoga Racetracks. Now there are four business groups bidding for the lucrative operating rights. The competition has been fierce in the years leading up to the turnover, and big money has certainly played a significant role in attempting to influence politics. The bidders Capital Play, Inc., Empire Racing Associates, LLC, Excelsior Racing Associates, LLC, and NYRA have altogether spent \$2.2 million on lobbying and campaign contributions since 2006, under the auspices of many different names, addresses, and LLCs.

The bidding process itself has undergone a series of transformations. Last year, Governor Pataki's Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Racing determined that Excelsior be given the rights. In March of 2007 Governor Spitzer announced that the venture would be reopened, and installed a new bidding process. All bidders would undergo an integrity review process, to include interviews, background checks, and business plan proposals for all three tracks, with consideration to improvements on the physical spaces and expansions in thoroughbred racing interests. This new process includes a collective price tag of \$3 million, which bidders are required to pay. In July, Governor Spitzer required new proposals because of various arrivals and departures in the groups, and announced that the operation of gaming and that of development and racing may be split.

The current figure of well over \$2 million dollars spent on lobbying and campaign contributions by the four bidders for the new racing contract is a pretty gamble: all bidders propose the use of video-lottery terminals (essentially digital slot machines), a proposal which, if approved, would bring in an estimated \$55 million in gross profit just for the state of New York. Not to mention, the three racetracks receive approximately \$2.7 billion in bets each year. Take a look at the breakdown in figures by requesting our Connect the Dots Factsheet, *Off to the Tracks for the Money Race*, on the back of this page.

## **The 10th Annual I Love an Ethical NY Awards Announced**

We are pleased to announce the recipients of our 10<sup>th</sup> Annual I Love an Ethical New York awards. This event celebrates New Yorkers who have made a significant difference over the past year. This is the first year of our new *Andrew Heiskell Youth Democracy in Action Award*, named in honor of past recipient Andrew Heiskell, a civic leader and benefactor of many public and nonprofit institutions. This year's recipients of the *Andrew Heiskell Award* are Justin Rockefeller and Andrew Talbott, on behalf of Generation Engage, a nonpartisan youth-civic-engagement initiative that connects young Americans to political leaders, to other civic organizations, and to meaningful debate about the future they will inherit. Kathryn Wylde on behalf of The Partnership for New York City is this year's recipient of the *Working Together to Forge a Better Democracy Award*. CC/NY would like to recognize Ms. Wylde's efforts and leadership on behalf of The Partnership for New York City, a coalition of public officials and business, civic, and community-based leaders in support of Mayor Bloomberg's Sustainability Initiative.

This year's event will be held November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 from 6:00pm - 8:30pm at the Rainbow Room, Pegasus Suites, at 30 Rockefeller Plaza. The night will include the awards ceremony as well as cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and a silent auction. Items available for auction include event tickets, spa treatments, baskets for pets and children, dinners, and much more. Proceeds from the auction will benefit the research projects and activities of CC/NY. Save the date on this exciting event, we hope to see you there! For a quick way to RSVP, please turn this sheet over.

**Common Cause/NY's I Love an Ethical New York**

Sponsor Levels include:

- Benefit Chair (\$25,000 – Head Table seating ten, top listing in all printed materials, and full-page ad)
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- Individual Ticket (\$250 – One Ticket)

Celebration Journal:

- Inside Front/Back Cover (\$4,000 each)
- Full Page (\$2,500)
- Half Page (\$1,000)
- Quarter Page (\$500)

*To place an ad, please contact the above. You may include your own message or fax/email a copy-ready ad.*

All contributions will fund C3 New York work-Making your vote count in New York State: before, during, and after the election.

***For additional information and to RSVP, please visit our website at [www.commoncause/ny](http://www.commoncause/ny) or call Krystyna Davenport, Associate Director of Special Events and Outreach, at 212.691.6421 ext. 203.***

**WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

To request materials, sign up for updates, or suggest a Connect the Dots topic, fax or mail this form back to us at 212-807-1809 or 155 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Fl.; New York, NY 10013:

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