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**In A Political Battle Unlike Any Other... Incumbent Champions, Legislative Veterans and Rookie's Face Off in a Challenge Outside of Albany**

*Legislators from Utica, Orange & Westchester Counties, New York City & Long Island Take It to the Track*

**October 17, 2013** – Typically these state legislators are squaring off in the legislative chambers in the State Capitol but this Saturday, they'll lay down their pens and pick up the reins to show their support of the agricultural and racing industry in New York State.

As part of the annual Fall Harvest Festival being held at Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway ("Empire City") on **October 19<sup>th</sup>**, eleven members of the State Assembly and Senate will compete in the Legislative Pace, consisting of non-wagering harness races, with some help from professional harness drivers. Post time is 5:10pm.

Incumbent Legislative Pace Champions, Assembly Members **J. Gary Pretlow** (89 AD - Mount Vernon), **Shelley Mayer** (90 AD – Yonkers), and **Joseph Saladino** (9 AD - Massapequa Park), will compete to see who retains bragging rights. While veteran participants, Assembly Members **Andrew Raia** (12 AD - Northport), **Keith Wright** (70 AD - Harlem), **Michael Benedetto** (82 AD - Bronx) will see who will be the first of the three to carry the title of champ.

Four rookies will participate for the first time, with Assembly Members **Michaëlle C. Solages** (22 AD - Valley Stream), **Rafael Espinal Jr.** (54 AD – Brooklyn), **Andrew Garbarino** (7 AD – Bayport) and **Frank Skartados** (104 AD – Newburgh) competing with the lone Senator **Joseph Griffo** (47 SD – Utica) to see who will take the reins and come out on top.

*"The Legislators' Pace has become a much-anticipated annual event among racing fans, residents statewide, and of course, our incredibly competitive state legislators," said **Tim Rooney, Jr.**, general counsel at Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway. "But for us, this is just a fun-filled way to remind the elected officials and residents who support us, that not only have we contributed over \$1.8 billion to the state's education funds, we've also helped revitalize the horse racing and agricultural industries across the state."*

Empire City's fifth annual Fall Harvest Festival is a free, family-fun event held on the track apron at the historic half-mile oval, and showcases the thriving relationship between horse racing and agriculture all across New York State. The event will take place on Saturday night, **October 19 from 5:00-9:00 p.m.**

The Fall Harvest Festival includes pony rides, face painting, pumpkin patch and musical entertainment, along with New York wine and beer product sampling. Of course, a full card of harness races is also part of the evening with the first post time at 7:10pm.

*"I am always excited to compete in the Legislative Challenge. It is a fun night, not just for those who are participating but for the entire family. Once again, Empire City has outdone themselves in providing a fun-filled evening for all," said **Assemblymember Michael Benedetto.***

*"I would like to thank both the Standardbred Owners Association of New York and Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway for hosting this event and the Fall Festival," said **Assemblymember Andrew Garbarino.** "These two organizations have helped make New York a leader in the standardbred breeding and racing industries. For many years, these two industries have provided much-needed jobs and revenue for the New York State economy."*

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*"I am looking forward to once again participating in this year's fall harvest festival. It is a wonderful community event, and I appreciate Empire City Casino providing it to the Yonkers community,"* said **Assemblymember Shelley Mayer**.

*"I've been attending this event every year since its inception, and every year I'm blown away at how much fun it is,"* said **Assemblyman Andrew Raia** (R,C,I-East Northport). *"Events like these are not just great fun for the whole family, but also critical to illustrating the importance of New York agriculture and business."*

*"The Fall Harvest Festival is one of the most exciting nights at Yonkers Raceway,"* said **Assemblymember Joseph Saladino**. *"After winning last year's race, I am thrilled to come back and defend my title and create another very exciting night. The legislative challenge is a not-to-be-missed event. I hope everyone comes out to Yonkers Raceway for a night of fun at the races."*

*"It is an honor to race at the Yonkers Raceway and participate in the fifth annual Fall Harvest Festival. Harness racing with my fellow New York State legislators highlights an industry that not only benefits the great state of New York, but also the local community,"* said **Assemblywoman Michaele C. Solages**. *"Yonkers Raceway, is the most premier harness racing track in the country. I am excited at the opportunity to celebrate New York State's advancements in the agriculture and equine industries at the harness racing capital."*

*"The fall harvest is a great opportunity for legislators to highlight one of the jewels of New York, Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway, and it gives us a great opportunity to mix business and pleasure,"* said **Assemblymember Keith Wright**. *"As a legislator from Harlem, I don't get a chance to ride too many horses. I look forward to seeing everyone as I come around the clubhouse turn."*

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