



## **STAFFORD MOTOR SPEEDWAY**

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March 4, 2011

Senator Daily, Representative Widlitz and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Mark Arute and I am the owner and Chief Executive Officer of Stafford Motor Speedway. I am writing to you today requesting the Committee to take no action on Section 38 of Senate Bill 1007 An Act Concerning the Governor's Revenue Recommendations.

Stafford Motor Speedway currently enjoys an exemption from the ten percent tax on the admission to events at the facility. This exemption is important because it allows us to limit the price of admission for our customers. It has also allowed us to make improvements to our facility employing local contractors to make these improvements. We have been able to hire additional employees and pay them above minimum wage. It has also allowed us to make generous charitable contributions to our local community, including but not limited to, Town of Stafford Police Department toward the purchase of a new police cruiser, Senior Center, Local Fire Departments, Stafford Springs Ambulance, Local Youth Organizations, Local Food Bank, Johnson Memorial Hospital, Stafford High School to name a few.

If the exemption were to be repealed it would affect Stafford Motor Speedway by requiring us to increase ticket prices which directly effects the customer and the business. We would have to pass the tax increase on to our customers in the form of higher ticket prices, which would result in the reduction of attendance.

It would also result in limiting improvements to our facilities, thus eliminating the use of local contractors. In addition we would be forced to reduce staff, both full and part time employees, sending them into the already burdened unemployment line.

Our contributions to our local not-for-profit charities and community programs would be minimized if not eliminated. Some of these programs count on our contributions each year. The youth programs we support such as soccer, football, baseball, softball, high school sports programs would also be limited.

The timing of the tax increase comes at a particularly difficult time. The Motorsports industry has suffered a drastic reduction in sponsorship, which results in fewer competitors and a shrinking fan base. We are very reliant on petroleum products and the rise in the pricing of oil has and will continue to affect our industry more than most. We are also facing increases in local taxes, unemployment taxes, insurance as well as utility rates, which is one of the highest in the United States.

We realize that the State of Connecticut is facing unprecedented budget shortfalls and that taxes will increase over a broad spectrum and we are prepared to weather that storm. But the repeal of the Admission Tax will definitely put our business in a perilous position.

I thank the Committee's time and thoughtfulness on this and other difficult issues. Feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concerns at Stafford Motor Speedway 860-684-2783.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark A. Arute". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mark A. Arute  
CEO/GM  
Stafford Motor Speedway