

November 10, 2020

The Honorable Roger Wicker, Chairman
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell:

We, the undersigned organizations, have for years worked to end the cruel practice of horse soring. We recently learned of Senator Lamar Alexander's proposed legislation drafted with the involvement of the segment of the Tennessee Walking Horse industry that has historically resisted efforts to end horse soring, which is being presented as a "compromise" bill. Each of our groups has identified major problems with this legislation and are united in our strong opposition to it.

Engaging closely with the sponsors of the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act (S. 1007/H.R. 693 in the 116th Congress), we have lobbied for and provided input into this essential legislation, which passed the House in July 2019 on a bipartisan vote of 333-96, is currently cosponsored by 52 Senators, and has garnered the support of a vast set of stakeholder groups and individuals. Identical legislation also was approved by the Senate Commerce Committee in 2014.

We firmly believe that this new proposal, if enacted, would not only perpetuate soring but make it even more difficult to detect, identify, and penalize. The proposal would establish an unacceptable inspection regime that allows and likely encourages inspectors to pass horses when they are experiencing pain. The proposal would also create a modified industry self-policing scheme that we believe would be even worse than the present flawed system deemed a "failure" by USDA's Inspector General in a 2010 audit of the agency's Horse Protection program.

The PAST Act, S. 1007/H.R. 693, follows the recommendation by the Inspector General to eliminate the current enforcement scheme and replace it with a system overseen by USDA alone, and makes other key reforms that are essential to end soring: prohibiting the use of all soring devices and tactics and prohibiting the soring of horses in the training barn (neither of which would be accomplished by the proposed "compromise bill"), as well as increasing penalties.

The Alexander proposal also goes well beyond the scope of the original PAST Act by extending to all show horse breeds prohibitions and restrictions that should only be applied to the three breeds that have historically been the victims of soring (Tennessee Walking Horses, Racking Horses and Spotted Saddle Horses). Forcing these prohibitions and restrictions on all other breeds and segments of the horse show industry is both unfair and unwarranted.

We strongly urge Congress not to move forward with this deeply flawed proposal, particularly in the coming weeks just before the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine is due to issue its report and recommendations on methods of detecting soring, following a thorough year-long study on this subject commissioned by USDA and the industry and partly funded by taxpayers.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully request that you do not support the proposed bill by Senator Alexander and do everything possible to ensure that it does not advance.

Sincerely,

David L. Foley, CAE
Executive Director
American Association of Equine Practitioners

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA
Director of Advocacy & Outreach
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association

Kitty Block
President and CEO
Humane Society of the United States

Sara Amundson
President
Humane Society Legislative Fund

Nancy Perry
Senior Vice President of Government Relations
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

Cathy Liss
President
Animal Welfare Institute

November 10, 2020

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky, Chairwoman
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

We, the undersigned organizations, have for years worked to end the cruel practice of horse soring. We recently learned of Senator Lamar Alexander's proposed legislation drafted with the involvement of the segment of the Tennessee Walking Horse industry that has historically resisted efforts to end horse soring, which is being presented as a "compromise" bill. Each of our groups has identified major problems with this legislation and are united in our strong opposition to it.

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