



Animal Welfare Institute

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January 28, 2020

Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

The Animal Welfare Institute, one of the nation's oldest animal welfare organizations, would like to express its strong support for the Horseracing Integrity Act (H.R. 1754). Introduced by Reps. Paul Tonko and Andy Barr, this commonsense bipartisan bill would protect racehorses and promote a sustainable horseracing industry throughout the United States.

Despite its national and international scope, modern U.S. horseracing is still operating under outdated, conflicting state-by-state drug and medication rules. Additionally, the inconsistent regulatory structures among the 38 racing jurisdictions present a severe obstacle to ensuring racehorses are not given unsafe drugs in order to boost performance. Currently, most American racehorses are given race-day medication—a practice that is banned on a near-global basis. Administering a cocktail of drugs shortly before a race can hide injuries, pain, inflammation, and other vulnerabilities that would otherwise alert owners and trainers to the potential of an impending breakdown.

This has all predictably led to hundreds of racehorses suffering catastrophic breakdowns on racetracks every year in the United States. In fact, five more horses have died just this month at Santa Anita, California's most well-known racetrack. This comes on the heels of the 56 horses who died at Santa Anita from July 2018 to November 2019. The alarming frequency of such fatalities is likely linked to the rampant use of drugs and the corresponding lax oversight and regulation allowed under the current management system.

The Horseracing Integrity Act would address this continued and dangerous reliance on drugs by establishing a nongovernmental, nonprofit agency to oversee a uniform medication policy and enforcement in horseracing across all 38 racing jurisdictions. Importantly, H.R. 1754 would also prohibit race-day medication, making racing safer for horses and aligning the U.S. with standards abroad. This much-needed bill enjoys broad, significant support within the horseracing industry, and has been endorsed by The Jockey Club, the Breeders' Cup Ltd., the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association, and many more, including track owners, horse owners, and trainers.

The Animal Welfare Institute appreciates the Energy and Commerce Committee's focus on the Horseracing Integrity Act this week. We urge your support for H.R. 1754 and we look forward to working with you as this bill advances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Blaney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy Blaney
Director
Government Affairs
nancy@awionline.org