

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Chair
Consumer Protection & Commerce Subcommittee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
Ranking Member
Consumer Protection & Commerce Subcommittee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 21, 2022

Dear Chair Schakowsky, and Ranking Member Bilirakis:

We the undersigned agree with and strongly support all efforts to stop the slaughter of horses, including passage of the Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act. While we represent many diverse tribes, the horse, native to North America, has been a common and vital part of our cultures for centuries as documented in petroglyphs and oral tradition. We were raised with the understanding that all forms of life have their own meaning and importance and should not be taken for granted. To ignore this, to not learn this precious truth that we must live in peace and harmony with all living beings, would adversely affect the body, mind, and spirit of our children. We need to teach all children to view life as sacred. Please join us by supporting an end to horse slaughter.

"This awareness of the horse's gifts to humans has transformed into a strong respect. This awareness has been gathering People across the country to protect this fine spirit from a very negative attack on their health and existence, by unconscious disrespectful humans in the name of greed. A horse can feel impending trauma in their environment. Yet, horses trust humans and so are being led to slaughter.

This is not a way of respecting life that children need to learn, as we adults having positions as role models and leaders in our communities. This energy, as we understand these actions to be, will indeed backfire, if people do not educate themselves about the importance of the different spiritual roles of all life forms. Some animal nations, indeed, give themselves for food. They actually know their purpose in the human's food chain, as long as humans understand this with respect. We should understand the Horse Nation has earned the right to live in Peace for what they have contributed to all our lives throughout history."

- Chief Arvol Looking Horse, 19th Generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe and spiritual leader of the Lakota, Dakota, Nakota Nation

“The Native American communities are by large, are appalled by the senseless and aggressive act of Horse Genocide. It is just a reminder of the 1800s and post reservation era when the U.S. decided to slaughter livestock here on the Navajo Reservation including horses. It had devastating results on our lives and took years to recover. As one of the original native horse cultures, we urge those who are responsible in making decisions to come back to that place of the heart and reconsider the consequences of horse slaughter of North America. To do so, no matter how justified it may be, only confirms ignorance and greed and does not serve the public’s will at-large, least of all; Indigenous communities...If there are overpopulated species, then we must admit that the problems lie with we humans who are destroyers of our world. The Native Americans, like my tribe, the Dineh, have had a special relationship with horses since time immemorial...As a Native Elder, who in the capacity as a Spiritual Advisor, I implore all to reconsider and find some amiable grounds to honor the Will of the Horse to survive the oppressive nature of humans!”

- Paul Crane Tohlakai, Dineh Elder and Horseman, Navajo Reservation

"Horse Slaughtering is NOT an Indian Tradition. The horse is recognized by the Southern Cherokee Government as a living Treasure."

- Carl Hudson, Chief Principal of the Southern Cherokee Government

“The Mustang Horse that roams this country shall from here in be referred to as “The Great American Mustang” or as “Łį́” as it is known in the Diné or Navajo Language. Łíín is an integral part of the cultural life ways to the Diné and deserves immediate protection against horse slaughter. Action must be taken to ensure contributions for its historical purpose and role in Native American and American history. The terminology and usage of the word feral is inappropriate and is dismissive of the cultural integrity of indigenous history, knowledge, practices, and traditional cultural properties pertaining to The Great American Mustang. Łį́’ in the Diné/Navajo language represents the relationship with the people and its ability to carry our burdens. The sacred bond to Łíín connects from birth with the umbilical cord tied to the mane. The horse carries us and our burdens through our life and is joined with rider in the spirit world. Łíín is indigenous and part of the landscape, and is essential for a balanced ecosystem, as the Creator intended it to be. Łį́’ has ceremonial implications for protection and is part of the blessing way ceremony, as well as the Enemy way Ceremony. Which is the essence of Diné beliefs and traditions. The Great American Mustang belongs upon this landscape and was given purpose from the Creator in order to maintain the health and wellbeing of the earth and to protect us as people and to help defend it from enemies.

The horse should not be used as a scapegoat in failed policies of land management! The forced removal of horses from their native environment, the detainment in holding facilities, and treatment of horses in the care of the federal government are all reminiscent of the tragic history and relationships between Native Americans and our treatment by the US federal government.”

“Stop horse slaughter now!”

- Clayton Benally, horseman, healer, award winning musician from the Diné Navajo Nation in Northern Arizona

The late Chief David Bald Eagle was a fierce advocate for the horse and long supported efforts to protect them from slaughter, including all previous versions of federal legislation to ban horse slaughter. Out of respect to his passion and legacy we are including a quote he provided to us on the previous bill banning horse slaughter.

"I am Chief David Bald Eagle. I have lived 94 years and hold the titles of Chief of the Minikoju Band of the Cheyenne River Tribe Lakota Indians. Also, I am the First Chief of the United Indigenous Nations of The Americas.

The Lakota are known as The Horse People...We have always held a special feeling for the horse. The horse is sacred to our people. We have never eaten the horse...The horse did not abandon us in Little Big Horn. The Horse did not abandon the Cherokee and Choctaw tribes in the Trails of Tears. The horse did not abandon us in our hunting. We will not abandon the horse now...The horse has and always will be a sacred animal to the Traditional Lakota people. We cannot abuse him or kill him for human consumption. In fact, the Lakota people themselves know that to do so will bring misfortune and even death to anyone who does. In these times we need the Native American people to wake up. It is easy to be misled by money, greed, and false power. The Native American people are easily influenced as they have strayed from our traditional values and Way of Life. If the Native American people allow the horse slaughterhouses on Indian lands, it opens the door for Government and other special interest groups to control our lands and our way of life. We condemn the slaughter of horses and the plans to create horse slaughterhouses on Indian Lands. It is a slap in the face, an insult to our people, our lands, and our way of life."

- Chief David Bald Eagle, Chief of the Minikoju Band of the Cheyenne River Tribe Lakota Indians, First Chief of the United Indigenous Nations of The Americas (April 8, 1919 – July 22, 2016)

cc:

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
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The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee House
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
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