

June 16, 2022

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Chairwoman
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

Dear Chairs Pallone and Schakowsky and Ranking Members McMorris Rodgers and Bilirakis:

For many years, our organizations have worked with Congress to end the cruel practice of horse soring, in which unscrupulous trainers deliberately inflict pain on the hooves and legs of Tennessee Walking Horses and related breeds using caustic chemicals, chains, weighted shoes, hard or sharp objects jammed into the tender soles, cutting, and other gruesome techniques to produce an artificially high-stepping gait and gain unfair competitive advantage at horse shows. We remain united in strong support of the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 5441 (currently with 257 cosponsors), to address this problem in an effective and carefully-crafted way. We appreciate that the Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee recently held a hearing on this bipartisan legislation, which is endorsed by [hundreds of stakeholder groups and individuals](#).

We urge the committee to mark up the PAST Act soon and approve it as introduced and already passed by an overwhelming bipartisan House vote of 333-96 in 2019. Identical legislation was also approved on a bipartisan basis by the Senate Commerce Committee in 2014, and it currently has 53 cosponsors (S. 2295).

We are aware of calls for the committee to gut the PAST Act by substituting a weakened version. This follows a similar effort in 2020 to push Congress to enact a dangerous bill as part of the FY21 omnibus that would entrench the current soring problem. Our organizations are united in strong opposition to this weakened measure because it would actually perpetuate soring by making it even more difficult to detect and penalize those engaged in this cruel practice. Among the proposal's key flaws, it would:

- establish a **complicated new inspection protocol that would disregard actual evidence of soring** – allowing and likely encouraging inspectors to pass horses when they are experiencing pain – and be inconsistent with recommendations by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine following its 16-month study on Methods of Detecting Soring;
- create a modified **industry self-policing scheme** that 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), pushing USDA even further out of the enforcement picture and strengthening the hand of the sorers, while for the first time making taxpayers pick up the tab for the cost of the industry's sham self-enforcement;
- **allow the continued use of stacks of pads on horses' hooves** – smaller than currently allowed, but still capable of concealing objects jammed into the horses' tender soles and cutting of their hooves to the quick, all to create pain – while creating an **illusion of enforceability** by conjuring the idea of an "easily removable shoe" option that is not currently in existence, and through the inspection protocol establishing barriers and disincentives for inspectors to check for concealed objects and other pain-inducing methods;
- render meaningless the prohibition on the act of soring, by **disallowing evidence collected in a training barn**.

Any proposal along these lines will not solve the soring problem and will actually worsen the situation for horses by locking into federal law a system that turns a blind eye to those committing the abuse. The equine community supports the PAST Act as written.

Those calling for the substitute legislation do not speak for the Tennessee Walking, Racking, and Spotted Saddle Horse industry as a whole. Only about 10% of those involved with showing these breeds engage in soring, while the other 90% – and the entire horse industry at large – support the PAST Act and want an end to this cruelty. Soring is not only immoral but bad for business, as the stigma associated with it drives down breeding fees and prices for horses in the affected breeds and drives away spectators and corporate sponsorships.

We hope that you will swiftly mark up the PAST Act, H.R. 5441, and oppose any attempt to weaken it. Thank you very much for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

Kitty Block
President and CEO
Humane Society of the United States

Sara Amundson
President
Humane Society Legislative Fund

Richard Patch
Vice President of Federal Affairs
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

Cathy Liss
President
Animal Welfare Institute

Teresa Bippen
President
Friends of Sound Horses (FOSH), Inc.