

Horse Slaughter and Tennessee Walking Horse Soring Debate Continue with Congressional Hearing on PAST & SAFE Acts Today

Animal Wellness Leaders Submit More than 330 Pages of Testimony and Supplements in Support of Legislation to End Horse Slaughter and Stamp Out Soring

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, USA, May 26, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce dove into debates about the treatment of horses in the United States. The Energy and Commerce

Subcommittee on Consumer Commerce and Protection, led by lifelong equine protection advocate Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., convened a hearing on the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 5541, and the Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act, H.R. 3355. The hearing began at 12 p.m. ET, and [both the live feed and replay can be found here.](#)

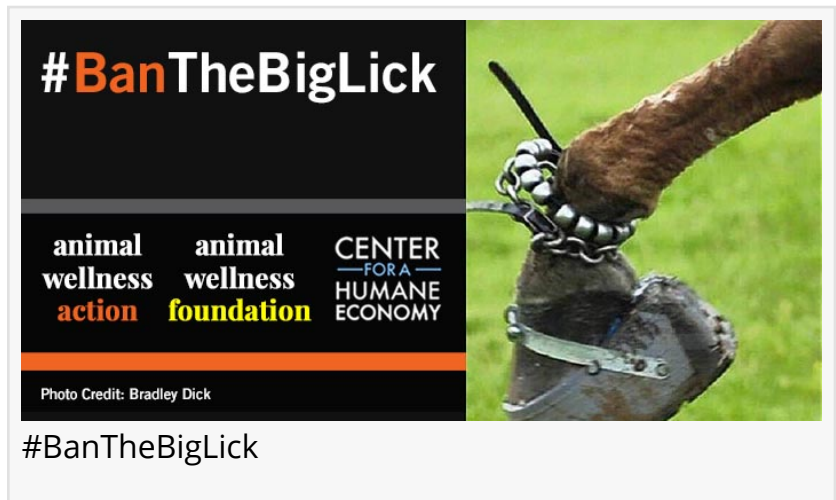
“

It's time to think outside the box.”

*Marty Irby, executive director
at Animal Wellness Action*

The substance of both measures has been introduced in each Congress since 2012. PAST would amend the Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970 help end soring – the intentional infliction of pain to Tennessee Walking Horses' front limbs in order to achieve the artificial high step known as the “Big Lick” that's prized in small rural parts of Tennessee and Kentucky. SAFE would bring an end to the gruesome trade in horse meat and the slaughter of American equines shipped to Mexico and Canada – some 23,000 of them in 2021. Animal Wellness Action (AWA) leaders have long pressed for passage of both bills.

Animal Wellness Action executive director Marty Irby, who testified in person before the Committee in 2013 on the issue of soring, submitted written testimony today, [including 332](#)

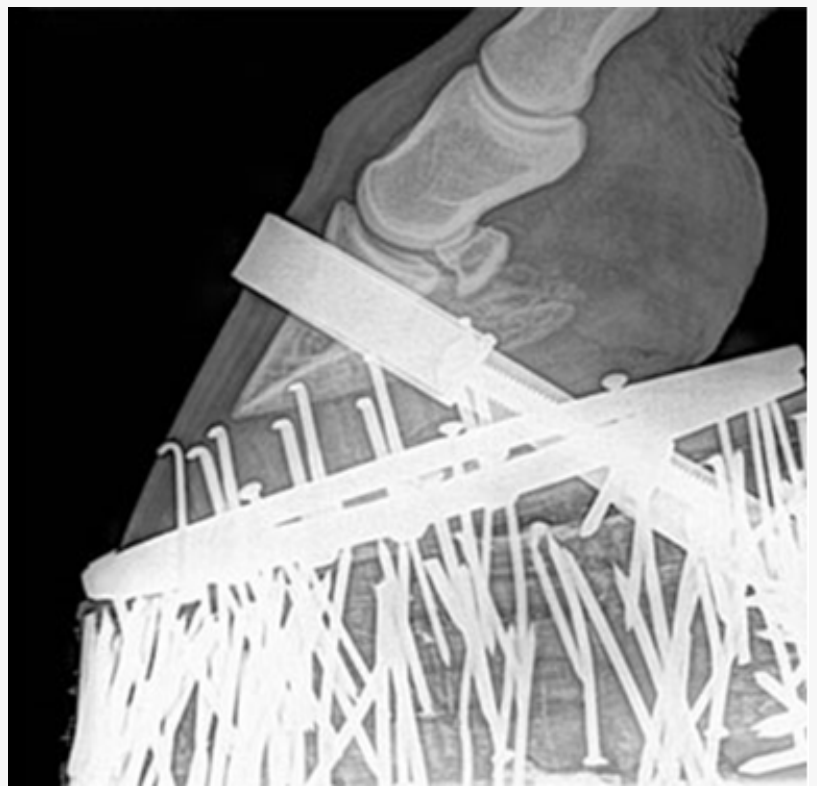


[pages](#) of collateral material that provided a history of work on the PAST Act and the issue of soring over the past decade. Irby, along with AWA and the Center for a Humane Economy's director of campaigns, Scott Beckstead, [also submitted written testimony and materials supporting the SAFE Act](#) as well.

"There has been no one who has worked harder or in a more creative manner to see the PAST Act or portions of it enacted through law or regulation than I, but every single attempt over the past decade has failed," wrote Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington, D.C., and a past president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association, in his testimony submitted to the committee today. "It's time to think outside of the box."

"These bills include the SAFE Act that I introduced with Rep. Buchanan. This legislation will protect horses from being slaughtered for human consumption. Horse slaughter is not only inherently cruel but is also very dangerous. Horse meat can be toxic," said Chairwoman Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill during the hearing. "And we also have the opportunity to end the abusive practice of horse soring. This horrifying act involves the intentional injury of horses hooves and legs of performing walking horses."

"We applaud Chairwoman Jan Schakowsky and Ranking Member Gus Bilirakis for highlighting the terrible practice of soring I have witnessed



AWA executive director Marty Irby testifying at a House hearing on H.R. 1754 in January 2020



U.S. Senator Joe Tydings

since childhood and call on the full committee to move the PAST and SAFE Acts swiftly to a markup," Irby added.

Irby was honored in 2020 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his work to end soring.

"Allowing our horses to be shipped across the border to be slaughtered for the sake of foreign meat companies is an un-American betrayal of a good and trusted friend," said Scott Beckstead, director of campaigns for the Center for a Humane Economy. "It's time to

align our deep love and respect for our equines with federal law by passing the SAFE Act."

animal wellness action

"My grandfather spoke often about compromise," said Ben Tydings Smith, grandson of the late U.S. Senator Joseph D. Tydings, author of the HPA designed to stamp out soring. "He spoke often about compromise related to the HPA and how he reached across the aisle to the late U.S. Senator Howard Baker, R-Tenn., to pass the measure and secure the very first law to protect our iconic American equines — whose very backs this country was built upon. He knew the HPA wasn't perfect. He knew the measure could have done more. But he also recognized that the perfect should never be the enemy of the good, and that supporting progress for horse protection was the right thing to do. The status quo was not acceptable to Joe Tydings."

Background

The PAST Act, H.R. 5441/S. 2295, introduced in the 117th Congress by U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo, R-Ida., and Mark Warner, D-Va., and Reps. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., Schakowsky, and Kurt Schrader, DVM, the only veterinarian in Congress, passed the House by a vote of 333 to 96 in 2019. It was renamed in 2019 the U.S. Senator Joseph D. Tydings Memorial PAST Act at the request of the Tydings family to honor the late senator, who passed away in late 2018. The bill died on arrival in the Senate due to lack of support from key leaders in the Upper Chamber.

PAST would eliminate the use large, stacked shoes, and ankle chains that are placed on horses' feet to exacerbate pain in the showring and produce the Big Lick; revamp the USDA's inspection program; and provide felony level penalties to give teeth to the HPA.

Following PAST's passage in the House in 2019, with the bill dead on arrival in the Senate, AWA leaders worked with the industry for 19 months on revisions to the bill that would bring support from the top organizations in the Tennessee Walking Horse breed and from senators from

Tennessee and Kentucky, who have long opposed the measure. That effort was torpedoed by the Humane Society of the United States and the Humane Society Legislative Fund. AWA also worked with leaders in the breed to secure more than \$3 million in record breaking funding for enforcement of the Horse Protection Act in 2022. The opportunity to make revisions to PAST still remains with Tennessee Walking Horse leaders who have conceded soring must end.

The SAFE Act, H.R. 3355/S. 2732, introduced in the 117th Congress by U.S. Sens. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Reps. Schakowsky and Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., would permanently ban the transport of horses bound for slaughter. A similar bill to ban horse slaughter saw a hearing in the previous Congress in the Health Subcommittee, but no further action occurred beyond that in either chamber. Irby also testified in support of the SAFE Act and legislation to end doping in American horse racing in a January 2020 hearing before Schakowsky's Subcommittee as well.

In 2021, AWA conceived and shepherded to passage an alternative anti-slaughter measure led by Reps. Troy Carter, D-La., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., John Katko, R-N.Y., Schakowsky, Cohen, and Rep. Dina Titus, D-N.V. The Members who introduced the legislation were joined by cosponsors that included co-chairs of the Congressional Horse Protection Caucus Andy Barr, R-Ky., and Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., and cochairs of the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus Vern Buchanan, and Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore. It would have simply banned the transport of equines across state and federal lines for the purposes of slaughter and passed the House in June of last year by a voice vote with little to no opposition.

That measure was endorsed by more than 225 equine related businesses, groups, organizations, and a wide array of stake holders that included The Jockey Club, The Breeders' Cup, Water, Hay Oats Alliance, New York Racing Association, and others. Unfortunately, just like PAST, the measure died in the U.S. Senate, where it continues to be an uphill battle to pass horse protection legislation in the 117th Congress.

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

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