

Delaying the Kentucky Derby May Help Churchill Downs, But It Won't Help Horses

Gambling Company Spends Tens of Thousands Lobbying Against Anti-Doping Legislation that Would Save Equine Lives

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, USA, March 17, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Louisville, Kentucky – Today, Animal Wellness Action took aim at Churchill Downs, the parent company and operator of The Kentucky Derby, for its self-serving announcement to delay the famed event while it quietly lobbies to block federal anti-doping legislation that would save horses and jockeys.



The Kentucky Derby

“Churchill Downs presumably has a rationale to protect people by not conducting an event while the nation tries to fend off more infections from COVID-19,” said Marty Irby, executive director of Animal Wellness Action. “But let's remember that this publicly traded corporation is putting horses and jockeys at risk at every track in the nation by actively working to block legislation in Congress that would end corrupt doping practices by some trainers and owners. The company values profits over safety.”

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*Marty Irby, executive director
at Animal Wellness Action*

Animal Wellness Action recently uncovered Churchill Downs' major political spending to block movement of Horseracing Integrity Act, H.R. 1754/S. 1820, which has 275 cosponsors in the Congress, including Kentucky Republican Representatives Andy Barr and James Comer. The reports

reveal Churchill paid [\\$30,000 to Harbinger Strategies](#) for the period of January 1, 2019 – March 31, 2019, for lobbying services by Manny Rossman, a Senior Policy Advisor to former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS); Steve Stombres, a Chief of Staff for former U.S. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA); and three additional lobbyists at the firm.

Adding a second firm in the second quarter named Subject Matter with eleven total lobbyists also at \$30,000, Churchill [paid a total of \\$60,000 to the two firms for the period of April 1, 2019 – June 30, 2019](#), another \$60,000 to the two firms for the period of July 1, 2019 – September 30, 2019, and \$60,000 more to the same two firms for the period of [October 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019](#).

If Churchill Downs continues at the current rate of spending \$60,000 per quarter, it'll likely shell out \$240,000 this year – primarily to defeat the Horseracing Integrity Act that would end race-day doping, create a uniform national standard for drug testing under the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), and bring integrity back to the sport. Despite this lobbying effort, there has not been a single lawmaker in either chamber who has articulated a case against the legislation, as lawmakers pile on in support of the bipartisan bills.

Last week, American horseracing's best-known figure, Bob Baffert, endorsed the Horseracing Integrity Act. He's part of a growing chorus of industry leaders demanding that Congress act and pass anti-doping legislation. His announcement came on the heels of the indictment of nearly 30 horseracing trainers, veterinarians, and drug distributors. The Jockey Club, the breed registry for the thoroughbred industry; the Stronach group, the largest racing interest in the U.S.; Keeneland, a major Kentucky racing business enterprise; and so many others have endorsed the HIA.

Churchill Downs has long been chastised by animal protection advocates for working against efforts to pass the Horseracing Integrity Act, H.R. 1754/S. 1820 that would ban the use of race-day medication, and create a uniform national standard for drug testing that would be overseen by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), and private non-profit that oversees Olympic testing, and other sporting events.

"It's unconscionable that a publicly traded corporation would spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to try to block industry-supported efforts to save equine lives and bring integrity back to the sport," added Irby. "There is no more important aspect of horseracing than the health, welfare, and safety of the horse." Nearly all other major sports leagues have cancelled their events indefinitely.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and



Hall of Fame Jockey Chris McCarron with Animal Wellness Action Executive Director Marty Irby in Saratoga Springs on Saturday Discussing Horse Protection Issues



Animal Wellness Action Executive Director Marty Irby

We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and

that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

Animal Wellness Action (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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