

U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell Announces Compromise Legislation to End Doping and Deaths in American Horseracing

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, August 31, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- U.S. Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) today announced his intent to introduce the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act, compromise legislation that would end the doping of Thoroughbred racehorses in the United States.

The doping of American racehorses has been a controversial issue over the past five years with hundreds of horses dying on racetracks weekly, and the indictment of 37 trainers and veterinarians in March of 2020.

[Animal Wellness Action](#) (AWA) has been a leader in the effort to end doping and is a member of the Coalition for Horseracing Integrity Act, H.R. 1754/S. 1820 with 257 House cosponsors and 26 Senate cosponsors. AWA's executive director, [Marty Irby](#), testified before Congress in support of the measure to end doping in January.

"The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act will bring 16 hands of integrity back to American horseracing by banning race-day doping," said Marty Irby, a lifelong horseman and executive director at Animal Wellness Action. "U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and others are right to



Churchill Downs | Photo Credit: Shutterstock



Animal Wellness Action Executive Director Marty Irby

press the industry to create a uniform anti-doping standard that will protect the horses and the sport against the worst impulses of some of its actors.”

“Kentucky is proud of our distinct horseracing traditions. We must address the challenges the sport faces so we can preserve our heritage and the jobs of over 24,000 Kentuckians who support it,” said U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. “As Senate Majority Leader, I look forward to working with Congressman Barr and our colleagues across the aisle on our legislation to give federal recognition to the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority. Together, we can better protect every competitor and give each of them a fair shot at the Winner’s Circle.”

Building on the Horseracing Integrity Act, McConnell’s Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act (HISA) is landmark legislation that would directly address the safety and welfare of racehorses, and the integrity of the sport itself, through better anti-doping measures and racetrack safety standards.

In an illustration of the broad industry support for change, this bill is now supported by all three Triple Crown racetracks, as Churchill Downs has endorsed the bill for the first time. The effort continues to enjoy the support of the Coalition for Horse Racing Integrity (CHRI), which includes the Jockey Club, the Breeders Cup, Keeneland Racecourse, the Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association, the Water Hay Oats Alliance, and animal welfare groups like Animal Wellness Action.

The fractured nature of anti-doping and track safety efforts across the U.S.’s 38 racing jurisdictions has undermined the public’s confidence in horseracing, threatened the integrity of competition, and endangered the human and equine athletes. Enactment of the HISA will address these problems head on while helping to enhance the public’s interest in this very important industry. For the safety of the horses and jockeys, and for the sport of horseracing itself, American horseracing needs the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act of 2020.

Key Provisions

In order to create these uniform performance and safety standards for the sport of horseracing, the HISA creates the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority, which is a private, independent, self-regulatory, nonprofit organization. It will not be funded by the federal government – the horseracing industry will pay the funds necessary for the establishment and administration of the Authority. The Authority is tasked with developing and implementing both a horseracing anti-doping and medication control program and a racetrack safety program.

Composition of the Authority

The Authority will be governed by a Board of Directors consisting of nine members. Five of those members will be independent of the industry, and four members will be experts from the following sectors of the industry: owners and breeders, trainers, racetracks, veterinarians, State racing commissions, and jockeys. To assist with the development of these programs, the Board will establish an anti-doping and medication control standing committee and a racetrack safety

standing committee, both controlled by independent members outside the industry. All independent members of the Board and standing committees will be subject to strict conflict-of-interest standards.

Anti-Doping Program

The Authority will be required to create a set of uniform anti-doping rules, including lists of prohibited substances and methods, protocols around the administration of permitted substances, and laboratory testing accreditation and protocols. These permitted and prohibited substances and practices will be developed after taking into consideration international anti-doping standards and veterinarian ethical standards, along with consulting racing industry representatives and the public. The new nationwide rules would replace the current patchwork of regulatory systems that govern horseracing's 38 separate racing jurisdictions. For services related to the enforcement of this program, the Authority shall enter into an agreement with the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, which has a proven track record of conducting anti-doping and medication control activities for all U.S. Olympic athletes and its approach can easily be adapted to horseracing.

Racetrack Safety Program

To protect the health and safety of racehorses and jockeys, the Authority will also create a racetrack safety program, consisting of a uniform set of training and racing safety standards and protocols. Those standards include racetrack design and maintenance, oversight of human and equine injury reporting and prevention, and the procedures for undertaking investigations at racetrack and non-racetrack facilities related to safety violations. The Authority creates an accreditation program to ensure that racetracks comply with these safety procedures, and in order to continue gather information on racetrack safety, the Authority will establish a nationwide database of racehorse safety, performance, health, and injury information within one year of the establishment of the program.

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.

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

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