

McConnell Introduces Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act, As House Committee Set to Pass Identical Companion Bill

Compromise Legislation Continues on Fastrack through Congress

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, September 9, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., Martha McSally, R-Ariz., and Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., introduced the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act – compromise legislation to ban race-day doping in Thoroughbred horseracing. In addition, the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, in a markup today, is set advance H.R. 1754, the Horseracing Integrity Act, led by U.S. Reps. Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., and Andy Barr, R-Ky., with text and title amended to mirror the Senate compromise bill.



Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act | Photo: Jana Germano

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The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act includes a ban on race-day doping, the establishment of a uniform national standard for rules and regulations for U.S. horseracing that would be overseen by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA). Building on the Horseracing Integrity Act, the similarly named 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.

“We applaud Leader McConnell and these other lawmakers for saddling up and charging ahead with this effort to reform American horse racing,” said [Marty Irby](#), executive director at Animal

Wellness Action [who testified](#) before Congress on the issue in January. “The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act will put the welfare of the horses at the center of the enterprise, and will create a level playing field for owners, trainers, breeders, and the betting public by ending doping in the sport.”

“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.”

The doping of American racehorses has been the subject of Congressional attention 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.

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 effort 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,



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



Animal Wellness Brands Logo



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

Keeneland Racecourse, the Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association, the Water Hay Oats Alliance, and animal welfare groups like Animal Wellness Action.

The patchwork of regulations 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.



Marty Irby and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in July 2019

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 to 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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