

House Committee Passes Horseracing Compromise; McConnell, Gillibrand, McSally, and Feinstein Introduce Senate Companion

Compromise Legislation Continues on Fastrack through Congress

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, September 10, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Wednesday, the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee passed H.R. 1754, the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act led by U.S. Reps. Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., and Andy Barr, R-Ky., that is now poised to advance to the House floor following a bipartisan vote of 46 to 5. The bill advanced with amendments that match legislation introduced today by U.S. Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#), R-Ky., and Senators Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., Martha McSally, R-Ariz., and Diane Feinstein, D-Calif.



Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act | Photo: Jana Germano

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*U.S. Senator Martha McSally,
R-Ariz.*

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). The 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 longtime anti-doping leaders Paul Tonko and

Andy Barr, and Senators McSally, McConnell, Gillibrand, and Feinstein who’ve saddled up to charge 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."

"Baseball, football, and other professional sports have a central regulatory authority. Thoroughbred racing should too," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on the Senate floor this morning. "Some of the biggest names in the sport -- Churchill Downs, Keeneland, the Breeders' Cup, and the Jockey Club, just to name a few -- are supporting our plan to provide federal recognition and enforcement power to an independent Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority."

"The misuse of potentially dangerous substances in racehorses to boost performance harms horses and has led to numerous injuries and deaths," said Senator Martha McSally, R-Ariz. "I have worked for years to protect racehorses against this abuse and uphold the integrity of the sport. I'm pleased to join Majority Leader McConnell and other bipartisan Senators to do just that by creating uniform racetrack safety standards that will better enforce anti-doping measures."

"Today's vote is a major step forward for our bipartisan drive to bring greater safety and integrity to the sport of horse racing," said Rep. Paul Tonko, D-N.Y. "Our bill delivers commonsense medication and track safety standards that protect America's horses and jockeys, needed progress that will put this popular and historic sport on track for a strong recovery and a bright future. Horse racing is more than the sport of kings, it also supports countless jobs and drives



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



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

vital economic activity in communities all across America. I thank my friend and colleague, Congressman Andy Barr, for leading with me for all these years in our push for sensible, compassionate reform. My thanks to our colleagues on the Committee on Energy and Commerce for advancing this critical bill and I look forward to a vote in the full House and hopefully the enactment of our Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act into law later this year."

"Today marks a major milestone in our bipartisan efforts to implement historic and lasting reforms for the horse racing industry," said Rep. Andy Barr, R-Ky. "Our amended legislation incorporates feedback from an expanded group of industry stakeholders to create essential uniform medication and track safety standards to protect the safety of our equine and human athletes. I want to thank my colleague Paul Tonko for his continued work and advocacy on this issue, as well as the over 250 Members who co-sponsored this legislation for their support. The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act has momentum in the House, and I look forward to getting it across the finish line and sending it to the President's desk."



Marty Irby and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in July



Yearlings at Stone Farm in Paris, Kentucky | Photo Credit: Marty Irby

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, 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.

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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