

U.S. House Passes Anti-Doping Bill to Reform American Horse Racing

Legislation Mirrors McConnell Introduced Bill in the U.S. Senate

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, September 29, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today the U.S. House of Representatives 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. by a voice vote. H.R. 1754 mirrors legislation recently introduced 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. and promises to end the era of widespread doping of horses in Thoroughbred racing in America.



Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act | Photo: Jana Germano

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.

“

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Monty Roberts, The Man Who Listens to Horses

“Doping of athletes in sport to enhance performance is widely recognized as a form of cheating in human competition,” said [Marty Irby](#), executive director at [Animal Wellness Action](#) who testified before Congress on the issue in January. “It’s equally wrong and even more dangerous for the athletes involved to allow widespread doping in American horse racing, and we call on the U.S. Senate to swiftly pass this measure that will put the welfare of the horse at the center of the enterprise.”

“During the course of winning 11 world championships in horse competitions, I learned valuable lessons. One that has stayed with me is, ‘A good trainer can make the horse to do almost anything. The great trainer can cause the horse to want to do it’, said [Monty Roberts](#), renowned horse trainer and New York Times bestselling author. “I love how our congress has now allowed the horse to love his work.”

“We applaud Reps. Tonko and Barr for reminding the nation that horses and jockeys, who are the athletes at core of the sport, should be our top priority when it comes to safety standards in racing,” added Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action, who testified in favor of the original anti-doping legislation more than six years ago. “We call on the Senate to saddle up and swiftly pass this measure that makes sense for animal welfare and the health and welfare of the jockeys who ride these majestic creatures.”

“After nearly six years working to advance this bipartisan legislation to modernize horseracing in the United States, we are at long last rounding the final turn,” said U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko, D-N.Y. “Our Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act puts the health and well-being of our equine athletes and jockeys firmly at the center of the sport and delivers commonsense medication and track safety standards that will lift this noble sport to higher standards of integrity and safety. These long overdue reforms will help restore public trust in the sport and put it on a



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 Saratoga Springs on Saturday Discussing Horse Protection Issues

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path to a long and vital future, supporting countless jobs and driving economic activity in communities across our nation. I thank my longtime collaborator and friend, Congressman Barr, for leading with me in this effort to restore integrity to our sport of kings. I urge my colleagues in the Senate to advance their companion legislation without delay and deliver it swiftly to the President to sign into law.”

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.

The bill has the support of Animal Wellness Action (AWA), the Animal Wellness Foundation (AWF), and key players throughout the horse racing industry, including all three Triple Crown racetracks. Churchill Downs, which runs the Kentucky Derby, is the most recent corporation to get on board. 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 AWA and AWF.

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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