

Tennessee Walking Horse Stakeholders, Animal Protection Organizations Announce Historic Effort to End Abusive ‘Soring’

Former Adversaries Come Together in the Spirit of Compromise for the Betterment of Horses and Ensure Sound Economic Future for the Breed

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EINPresswire.com/ -- NASHVILLE,
TENNESSEE – Today Animal Wellness
Action (AWA), the Animal Wellness
Foundation (AWF), the Center for a
Humane Economy, Horses for Life
Foundation, American Horse

Protection Society, and key stakeholders in the Tennessee Walking Horse industry announced a historic effort that seeks to end soring, protect the Tennessee Walking Horse and the breed, and preserve a show horse that the public will applaud. These key players have agreed to support legislation to ban action devices and tail braces, to dramatically reduce the size of the shoe, and to establish additional penalties for horse soring.

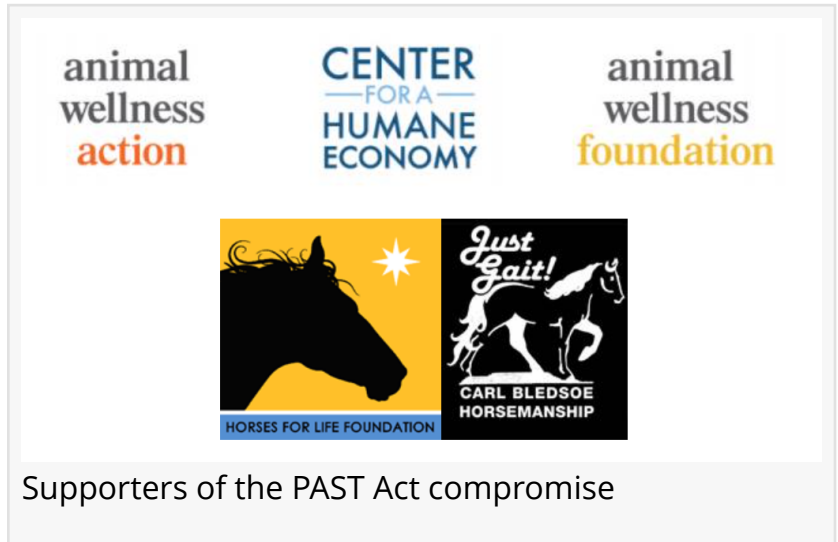
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Marty Irby

The Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970 authored by the late U.S. Senators Joe Tydings, D-MD, and Howard Baker, R-Tenn., was enacted to stamp out soring but left loopholes that have allowed the practice to persist. Over the past eight years, more than 20 pieces of legislation and amendments to the HPA have been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate geared at combating the painful practices of soring – the intentional infliction of pain to horses’ feet to achieve an unnatural high-step that trainers utilize to cheat and avert proper

training practices. Not a single measure has been enacted, leaving a 50-year-old statute to govern the management of regulated horse shows.



The U.S. Senator Joseph D. Tydings Memorial Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 693/ S. 1007 (named only Prevent All Soring Tactics in the Senate) passed the U.S. House in July 2019 but is stalled in the U.S. Senate, with no reasonable prospects of that circumstance changing. This is the ninth rendition of the bill since 2012, and the Senate has never taken up the bill on the floor. The Horse Protection Amendments Act, H.R. 1157/S. 1455, introduced on seven occasions in either the House or Senate, and supported by the Tennessee Walking Horse industry, has also not advanced. Even attempts to finalize regulations to end soring has long-failed at every turn.

“Bitter political adversaries have come together to break the logjam in Congress and put the nation on a path to end horse soring,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action, and the Center for a Humane Economy. “If enacted, this deal will end the political stalemate in Congress and take the pain out of Walking horse shows throughout the South.”

“This very detailed compromise between key leaders in the animal welfare community and Walking horse leaders is 100 percent about the welfare of the Tennessee Walking Horse - not about the horse politics,” said Frank Eichler, owner, and proprietor of Rising Star Ranch, the largest Tennessee Walking Horse breeding operation in the U.S. “Our pledge to support these reforms in statute represents the strongest commitment ever to move the industry forward and utilize science-based testing to eliminate soring. Third-parties trying to thwart this common-sense agreement will only hurt the horse.”

“The historical effort announced today is the greatest step we’ve seen in half a century to help end the scourge of soring, protect the horses, and allow the Tennessee Walking Horse to step soundly into the future,” said Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action and former president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders’ & Exhibitors’ Association who was recently recognized by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, for his work to end soring. “Naysayers on both sides of the issue can either continue to throw rocks at those who are seeking viable reform or they can step up, join our discussion and help work together to allow the Tennessee Walking Horse to regain its rightful place as America’s horse – the horse that Roy Rogers, John Wayne, Dale Evans, and President Lyndon B. Johnson prized and rode. We invite every equine industry, veterinary, and animal protection stakeholder to the table of compromise.”

“With the passage of the PAST Act in the U.S. House last July, we are now at a tipping point to finally signing this vital legislation into federal law,” said Allondra Stevens, founder of Horses For Life Foundation. “To avoid its blockage in the Senate, these negotiations present a window of opportunity to drive the bill forward. It’s incumbent on all of us to work together to ensure that American horses are no longer subjected to the senseless, abject torture of soring.”

“My grandfather spoke often about compromise. He spoke often about compromise related to the Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970, and how he reached across the aisle to the late U.S. Senator Howard Baker, R-Tenn., to pass the measure and secure the very first law to protect our iconic American equines – whose very backs this country was built upon,” said Ben Tydings Smith, the grandson of the late Senator Joseph D. Tydings. “He went further, and he reached

across the aisle to ensure that President Richard M. Nixon signed the bill into law, and he conveyed it wasn't easy. He knew the HPA wasn't perfect, he knew the measure could have done more – but he also recognized that the perfect should never be the enemy of the good and that supporting progress for horse protection was the right thing to do. The status quo was not acceptable to Joe Tydings.”

“What a historical day for the Tennessee Walking Horse! I've worked with horses my entire life and throughout those years, I've worked with many breeds but none as resilient, talented and forgiving as the Tennessee Walking Horse,” said Carl Bledsoe, a world champion Tennessee Walking Horse trainer who has led the charge for reform in the training segment of the breed. “It's time for everyone to unite and put their differences aside to champion for this incredible breed and move them into their rightful place in the equine world that they not only have earned but deserved.”

Click to view each of the [letters of support](#) for the new legislation still pending changes.

Click to [listen to the Animal Wellness Podcast](#) released today on the PAST Act compromise with Priscilla Presley, longtime anti-soring advocate, and Monty Roberts, the “Man Who Listens to Horses.”

Click to watch Animal Wellness Action's recent stakeholder town hall on the new legislation.

Points of Agreement these Stakeholders Seek to Achieve in Compromise Legislation:

- Establishing new and additional penalties for horse soring.
- Eliminating of chains and action devices utilized to exacerbate pain derived from soring.
- Reducing the size of large, stacked shoes (currently 4.5-8 inches in height) to 1.5 inches at the toe and 2.5 inches in height (the same as other breeds that have shoe assemblies).
- Banning the use of tungsten, lead, or other heavy elements or composites in the shoe, and a ban on the use of metal bands to affix a heavy shoe to the hoof.
- Eliminating tail braces and tail docking (currently allowed and continuing in other breeds).
- Banning the possession of caustic chemicals and devices utilized in the soring process.
- Upgrading penalties for violators of the HPA.
- Creating a new organization that will impose immediate penalties and fines on violators of the HPA while still allowing the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and U.S. Dept. of Justice to impose fines and penalties through Federal prosecution.
- Establishing an inspection program that parallels favor objective, science-based testing methods, as used by other breeds that conduct in-house testing.
- Employing independent inspectors that are licensed and certified by the USDA.
- Limiting the application of the legislation to Tennessee Walking, Racking and Spotted Saddle Horse.

Additional points of clarification:

- The bill is being adjusted to reflect the views of additional stakeholders.
- The prohibition of action devices and tail braces, and limitation on the size of the shoe assembly, are limited to the Tennessee Walking, Racking and Spotted Saddle Horses.
- This compromise has a wider range of reforms than the PAST Act
- The shoe assembly permitted is no larger than the limited packages used in some other show breeds and that are not subject to inspection.

Animal Wellness 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 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.

The Center for a Humane Economy ("the Center") is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

Horses For Life Foundation is an advocacy and education group dedicated to ending the slaughter of American horses, protecting wild horses and burros on public lands, and ending equine abuse and neglect through advocacy, public education, and legislative reform.

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