

Years of outcry against horse deaths at racetracks prompts passage of new federal law

Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act signed into law with passage of federal omnibus package today.

WASHINGTON, DC, US, December 28, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After years of efforts to end the horse racing practices that have caused thousands of horses to die or suffer injuries, the Humane Society Legislative Fund and the Humane Society of the United States celebrate the culmination of a successful campaign to secure the historic passage of the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act. That bill became law when President Trump signed the federal omnibus package today.

At least eight horses on average died at racetracks per week during the 2019 racing season, based on what is reported publicly, though accounts indicate the number is likely to be much higher.

Reform within the horse racing industry has been a long time coming, with various bills introduced over the last few Congresses intent on addressing the doping of racehorses. The HSUS and HSLF have proactively lobbied for horse racing reform throughout those years, joining reform-minded racing industry leaders in meetings with lawmakers to support and identify the best path forward to reforming the industry by protecting racehorses.

The HSUS also enlisted the support of The Jockey Club in the creation of the HSUS National Horse Racing Advisory Council, which brought in stakeholders to build support for the passage of federal protection of horses harmed by unscrupulous actors in the racing industry.

Kitty Block, president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States and Sara Amundson, president of the Humane Society Legislative Fund jointly stated: "This is a blue-ribbon moment in the history of American horseracing, and this measure is a reminder that goodwill is indispensable in our politics. Working together with stakeholders to get it across the finish line, leaders in Congress have helped to put the industry on a strong path to positive reforms that will save countless horses from agony and preventable death. With their success in brokering an agreement with disparate stakeholders, and their dedicated work in the stretch run, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand, Dianne Feinstein and Martha McSally and Reps. Andy Barr and Paul Tonko have risen to the occasion, building a broad base of support for lasting and meaningful change."

The HSUS and HSLF's critical work leading to today's victory includes:

- Providing vital input on the original Horseracing Integrity Act.
- Mobilizing thousands of passionate horse enthusiasts who brought the issue to the attention of their representatives in Congress.
- Helping to build a strong showing of bipartisan cosponsors in the House and Senate.
- Supporting House Energy and Commerce Consumer Protection and Commerce subcommittee chairwoman Jan Schakowsky's, D-Ill., persuasive hearing in January.
- Working with Representatives Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., Andy Barr, R-Ky., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y. to strengthen the bill and mitigate unintended consequences before introduction and movement on it in September.
- Lobbying in support of House Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone's, D-N.J., markup of the revised language.
- Lobbying leadership in the House and Senate to include the horseracing bill in the final legislative package.

Unlike other sports that have a regulatory body that provides oversight and can sanction those who defy industry rules, horse racing has no national governing body that can regulate the industry. Each state's racing commission determines which drugs can be administered to racehorses and sets the penalties for those who violate such rules.

The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act will create an independent authority that contracts with the United States Anti-Doping Agency to establish and oversee drug enforcement. Uniform and rigorous rules, testing and penalties will address the abuse of both pain masking and performance enhancing drugs. The bill also creates a committee tasked with mandating enhanced racetrack safety protocols to further protect both racehorses and jockeys.

In addition to the HSUS' and HSLF's efforts to reform the horse racing industry, the omnibus package included language that will ensure horse slaughter plants within the U.S. do not reopen as well as funding of \$2,009,000 for U.S. Department of Agriculture enforcement of the Horse Protection Act and language strongly urging the agency to reinstate a 2017 rule strengthening regulations to curb the cruel practice of horse soring.

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About the Humane Society of the United States:

We fight the big fights to end suffering for all animals. Together with millions of supporters, we take on puppy mills, factory farms, trophy hunts, animal testing and other cruel industries. With our affiliates, we rescue and care for thousands of animals every year through our animal rescue team's work and other hands-on animal care services. We fight all forms of animal cruelty to achieve the vision behind our name: a humane society.

Subscribe to Kitty Block's blog, [A Humane World](#). Follow the HSUS Media Relations department

on Twitter. Read the award-winning All Animals magazine. Listen to the Humane Voices Podcast.□

About Humane Society Legislative Fund:

The Humane Society Legislative Fund is a social welfare organization incorporated under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code and formed in 2004 as a separate lobbying affiliate of the Humane Society of the United States. The HSLF works to pass animal protection laws at the state and federal level, to educate the public about animal protection issues, and to support humane candidates for office. Visit us on all our channels: on the web at hslf.org, on our blog at animalsandpolitics.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/humanelegislation and on Twitter at twitter.com/HSLegFund.

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