

Rep. Steve Cohen's Legislation to End Tennessee Walking Horse Abuse Clears House Markup for the First Time in 10 Years

Horseman honored by the queen submitted more than 50 pages of supporting documents on horse 'soring' that Congress addressed Wednesday in full Committee

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, UNITED STATES, September 22, 2022 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- On Wednesday afternoon the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce passed the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 5441, by a vote of 46 to 9 in a markup that will now advance the measure and ready the bill for a House floor vote. The legislation was introduced by Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Memphis, in the fall of 2021.

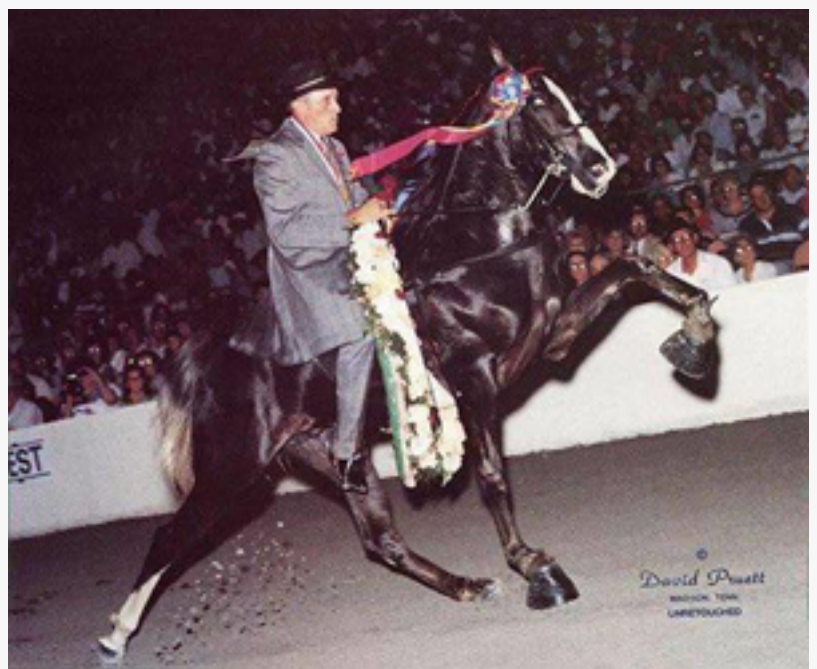


Rep. Steve Cohen discussing horse protection issues with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Priscilla Presley in January of 2019 | Photo Credit: Marty Irby

The substance of this measure has been introduced in each Congress since 2012. PAST would amend the Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970 to help end soring – the intentional infliction of pain to Tennessee Walking, Racking, and Spotted Saddle Horses' front limbs by applying caustic chemicals to the skin or inserting sharp objects in the hooves in order to achieve the artificial high step known as the "Big Lick" that's prized in small rural parts of Alabama, Tennessee and Kentucky. Animal Wellness Action leaders have advocated for passage of the bill with Executive Director [Marty Irby](#) testifying in support of the measure in a 2013 Subcommittee hearing on the legislation.

Animal Wellness Action today submitted a letter and more than [50 pages](#) of supporting materials to the House Energy and Commerce Committee to further supplement the 330 plus pages submitted during the Subcommittee's May hearing on the bill and subsequent documentation during the Subcommittee's markup on the PAST Act a few months ago.

"We are encouraged to see this movement in Congress to help secure fair treatment of horses in the U.S. with the PAST Act following my dear friend Queen Elizabeth II's departure," said Monty Roberts, "the Man Who Listens to Horses," one of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's most trusted confidants. "Soring is a terrible practice that I have been working with Marty Irby for the past 17 years to eradicate, and Her Majesty was well aware of our efforts to end it. She was inspired to honor Marty Irby with recognition in 2020 for his work on this issue."



1992 Tennessee Walking Horse 2-Year-Old World Grand Champion JFK | Photo Credit: David Pruett

"We applaud Rep. Steve Cohen, the Committee leaders, and every Member of the U.S. House who has long supported the PAST Act that will end the most egregious horse abuse in America," said Marty Irby, who is also an eight-time world champion equestrian and past president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association.

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"Our civilization was built on the backs of horses, and it's long past time we properly protect them. Like the double rainbow the world saw following Queen Elizabeth's passing, I believe we're seeing an Act of God with this movement of PAST. The cause to end the abusive practice of soring has found a new angel, and I am so grateful to see this legislation clear the full Committee for the first time in 10 years." Irby added.

Irby was honored in 2020 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his work to end soring and protect American equines.

His most recent written work on soring and the queen, published this month by [NBC News](#), can be found here.

"The practice of soring horses, which is the intentional infliction of pain on horses' feet and legs using caustic chemicals, chains, weighted shoes, cutting, and other torturous techniques to force them to perform a painful, artificially high-stepping gait known as the 'Big Lick,' is completely unacceptable, inhumane and unsportsmanlike," said Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Memphis. "The practice has marred the Tennessee Walking Horse and related breeds for more than 60 years. I

was proud to reintroduce the PAST Act last October to finally eradicate this indefensible practice and treat horses humanely.”

“I applaud the U.S. House Committee for advancing the PAST Act that I’ve worked with Monty Roberts and Marty Irby for the last 9 years to enact,” said Carl Bledsoe, a lifelong Tennessee Walking Horse trainer working to promote natural and more humane training principles and concepts. “It’s time to see the end of soring that’s plagued these horses we love so dearly for far too long and I call on the Congress to swiftly pass the PAST Act.”

“As you know, the late queen was a great horse advocate and apparently weighed in at some point on this legislation,” said House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee Chairwoman Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., a lifelong horsewoman and longtime co-leader of the PAST Act during the markup today. “I also want to thank all the advocates who have worked diligently for years.”

Background

The PAST Act, H.R. 5441/S. 2295, was introduced in the 117th Congress by U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo, R-Ida., and Mark Warner, D-Va., and Reps. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., Schakowsky, and Kurt Schrader, D-Ore., DVM, the only veterinarian in Congress. It passed the House by a vote of 333 to 96 in 2019 and was renamed in the U.S. Senator Joseph D. Tydings Memorial PAST Act at the request of the Tydings family to honor the late senator, who passed away in late 2018. The bill died on arrival in the Senate due to lack of support from key leaders in the Upper Chamber.

PAST would eliminate the use of large, stacked shoes and the ankle chains that are placed on horses’ feet to exacerbate pain in the showring and produce the Big Lick; revamp the USDA’s



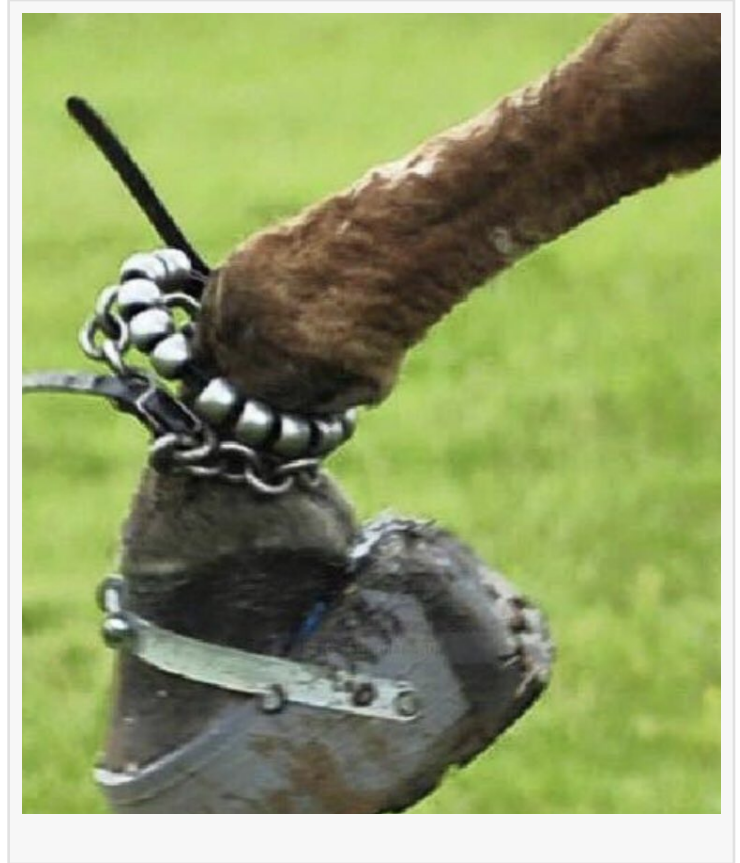
Left: Longtime federal witness and advocate Marty Irby joins Rep. Jan Schakowsky in the House Commerce Committee hearing room | Right: Queen Elizabeth II, Shutterstock:



Monty Roberts | Photo Credit: Monty Roberts, Shutterstock, and Craig Swanson Design

inspection program; and provide felony level penalties to give teeth to the HPA.

Following PAST's passage in the House in 2019, Animal Wellness Action leaders worked with the industry for 19 months on revisions to the bill that would bring support from the top organizations in the Tennessee Walking Horse breed and from senators from Tennessee and Kentucky, who have long opposed the measure. They also worked with leaders in the breed to secure more than \$3 million in record breaking funding for enforcement of the Horse Protection Act in 2022, and more than \$4 million in funding for 2023 in the U.S. House Agriculture spending bill. The opportunity to make revisions to PAST still remains with Tennessee Walking Horse leaders who have conceded soring must end.



Click [here](#) to visit Animal Wellness Action's microsite on the PAST Act and [here](#) to view Irby and Roberts discuss soring and the PAST Act in depth.

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.

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