

April 18, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture  
Kevin Shea, APHIS Administrator  
Dr. Andrea Morgan, APHIS  
Dr. Gipson, APHIS  
Dr. Cezar, APHIS  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack, Mr. Shea, Dr. Gipson and Dr. Cezar;

I am writing on behalf of the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration ("Celebration"), Performance Show Horse Association ("PSHA"), Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' and Exhibitors Association, the Walking Horse Trainer's Association and the Tennessee Walking Horse Industry. I have been an adviser to the Celebration and PSHA as well as a current owner and breeder in the Tennessee Walking Horse Industry. As I am sure you are aware the Industry and specifically these Organizations are in full support of the Blackburn/Alexander HR 4098/S2193 legislation and opposed to the HSUS/Whitfield/Ayotte HR 1518/S1406 bills. While there are numerous reasons which I and these Organizations would be happy to discuss the purpose of this letter is not political.

The Industry and specifically these Organizations are committed to moving forward with the intent and specifics of the Blackburn/Alexander amendment even before any final resolution of the different legislative proposals. What that means is that these Organizations would like to implement the Independent HIO with an Independent Board, non-conflicted inspectors, committed to establishing objective inspections protocols with associated significant penalties, utilizing a Veterinarian Advisory Board and continuing to follow the current HPA and Regulations, and ultimately eliminating soring within the TWH Industry.

In order to do that it needs to have an Independent HIO. On or about December 18, 2013 Dr. Meadows applied for such an HIO. The intent and commitment is to obtain that HIO and establish it with an Independent Board identical to that outlined in the Blackburn/Alexander amendments. All of the necessary documents including the following have been developed and will be available for the Independent Board to review, modify and execute upon being seated;

1. HIO By-laws
2. HIO Rulebook
3. HIO Penalty Matrix
4. Inspector non-conflicted affidavit
5. DQP/Inspector Training Manual
6. Affiliation Agreement

Judging will also be managed by this Independent HIO along the lines suggested previously by Dr. Gipson since this is the "last step in the inspection process" and therefore the following materials have also been developed for the Independent Boards review;

1. Judges Rulebook
2. Judges Training Manual
3. Judges Code of Ethics
4. Judges Penalty Matrix

In addition efforts have been ongoing to identify Independent Board members, Independent Veterinarian Advisory Board members, as well as initial work on establishing objective inspection protocols and associated penalties.

As a final point the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration is committed to exiting the HIO business. These Organizations are also committed to encouraging all TWH shows and events to affiliate with the Independent HIO, and believe with the proper support by the USDA, the Independent Board, the Veterinarian Advisory Board, and others it can be successful in this initiative and to ultimately eliminate all soring within the Industry.

However in order to accomplish the above the first step is the issuance of the Independent HIO. We would appreciate your attention and consideration to issuing that HIO as soon as practical. If there is anything you need to complete that process please let me know and I will personally ensure that it is provided.

Sincerely



Frank Eichler

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, United States Senate  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Republican Leader, United States Senate  
The Honorable Marsha Blackburn, Member of Congress  
The Honorable Harold Rogers, Member of Congress  
The Honorable Frank Lucas, Member of Congress