



March 7, 2014

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
U.S. House of Representatives
217 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Blackburn:

The American Farm Bureau Federation supports the goals of H.R. 4098, the *Horse Protection Amendments Act*, legislation you and your colleagues have introduced to enact science-based reforms to eliminate intentional horse soring. While soring occurs in less than 1 percent of horses inspected, it is an unacceptable practice that right-minded horse owners do not condone and one that mars the image of all horse men and women.

Horse soring was banned by the federal Horse Protection Act (HPA) decades ago. However, enforcement of the HPA relative to soring has been challenged by inconsistent inspection standards and the lack of reliable, objective science-based techniques and tools that ensure uniformity among inspectors in attendance at various Tennessee Walking Horse events.

H.R. 4098 would include a clear definition of “objective inspection” centered on science-based methods that have been tested to ensure reliable, reproducible results. In addition, the bill would create a single “Horse Industry Organization” (HIO) governed by expert individuals appointed by the secretary of agriculture. This HIO would establish a formal affiliation with each horse sale, exhibition, show or auction in coordination with the secretary to conduct HPA inspections.

The HIO would be comprised of state agriculture officials and representatives of the Tennessee Walking Horse industry and the Walking Horse Trainers’ Association and subject to federal conflict of interest rules. In turn, the HIO would be directed to establish strict conflict of interest policies for any individual licensed by the HIO to conduct inspections.

Finally, H.R. 4098 takes important steps to address concerns Farm Bureau has regarding other proposed horse soring legislation by:

- Focusing on objective, science-based inspection methods that can distinguish between legitimate training techniques and devices versus illegal soring methods;
- Establishing a panel appointed by USDA comprised of state officials and industry experts to license and oversee inspectors to meet demand; and
- Reinforcing current activities and oversight roles conducted by USDA.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Bob Stallman
President