

SCOTT DESJARLAIS, M.D.
4TH DISTRICT, TENNESSEE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4204

March 30, 2017

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The Honorable Pete Sessions
Chairman
The Committee on Rules
U.S. House of Representatives
H-312 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Louise Slaughter
Ranking Member
The Committee on Rules
U.S. House of Representatives
H-312 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sessions and Ranking Member Slaughter:

I am writing today to bring to your attention a matter of great importance to my constituents and thousands of hard working families across Tennessee, Kentucky, and other states. This matter concerns attempts by animal rights groups, such as the Humane Society of the United States and other similar organizations, to create false perceptions about the Tennessee Walking Horse industry and the inspection methods utilized for competition. This industry has proven vital to the Volunteer State and Tennessee's Fourth District and I am concerned by certain groups' efforts to impact it negatively through legislation and rule-making initiated by the previous administration at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Although the industry has experienced its share of setbacks, due in large part to a small number of "bad actors" who generated negative stories, the industry as a whole has worked tirelessly over the past few years to rid itself of this minority. In fact, according to the USDA's own data, the industry has had an average inspection compliance rate of 96% over the past few years and is working diligently towards achieving a 100% rating.

I have worked with the industry to introduce legislation, H.R. 1338, the *Horse Protection Amendments Act*. H.R. 1338 builds upon the Horse Protection Act (HPA) by putting in place common-sense reforms within the inspection process by requiring science-based, objective inspections in order to ensure full compliance with the HPA.

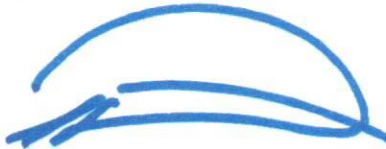
Conversely, those who supported H.R. 3268, the *Prevent All Soring Tactics Act* (PAST Act) in the 114th Congress, and who have signed on to the legislation again in the 115th, seem to be misinformed about the gravity of these issues. It is my understanding that supporters of the legislation are referring to it, and the topic of horse inspection, as "non-controversial". I wish to convey to you that this statement is inaccurate. Horse inspection has proven to be a controversial topic. It has become clear that an animal rights group is seeking to

dissolve an industry important to rural farming communities across my state and many others. If enacted, the PAST Act would effectively eliminate a long standing tradition of showing Walking Horses. I can assure you that the Walking Horse industry has worked tirelessly to eliminate wrongdoers and remains the staunchest advocate of promoting safe and fair competition for all involved so that this tradition may continue.

It is important to note that, as I indicated earlier, this issue is of great importance to communities across Tennessee and Kentucky. A majority of these state delegations have joined me as co-sponsors of H.R. 1338 as they know the issue well and recognize the far reaching ramifications possible if the Humane Society sponsored legislation moves forward.

I want to thank both of you in advance for your time and attention to this information. I look forward to educating Members of Congress about the *Horse Protection Amendments Act* and its common-sense approach to reforming the issue surrounding the Tennessee Walking Horse industry. By no means are the issues associated "non-controversial" and this industry that is so crucial to state economies deserves the attention of a full legislative process. I respectfully request that you review the PAST Act upon its reintroduction and that it not be included on the suspension calendar for the reasons aforementioned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, sweeping arch over a horizontal line, with a few additional strokes below.

Scott DesJarlais, M.D.
Member of Congress