

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 9, 2017

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We are writing to call your attention to a rule that was finalized, but not published, by the previous administration and is vital to protecting certain horse breeds: “Horse Protection; Licensing of Designated Qualified Persons and Other Amendments” [Docket No. APHIS-2011-0009].

The rule specifically addresses the practice of horse soring and strengthens the ability of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to enforce the *Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970*. “Soring” is an illegal practice where the legs and hooves of horses are deliberately irritated with either chemicals or non-therapeutic devices with the intent of producing an exaggerated and unnatural gait referred to as the “Big Lick” at certain horse competitions. Some horse breeds are naturally inclined to execute a beautiful high-step gait, but soring further exaggerates the gait. The practice of soring is most commonly found among the Tennessee Walking Horses, Racking Horses, and Spotted Saddle Horses.

In July 2016, the USDA issued a proposed rule including key reforms. One-hundred and eighty-two Representatives and forty-two Senators sent letters strongly supporting the rule and urging that it be completed swiftly, along with more than 100,000 public comments from citizens supporting the rule. This rule was seven years in the making and has enjoyed continued bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress. Additionally, the rule has been supported by over one hundred horse organizations, veterinary and animal health organizations and animal protection organizations.

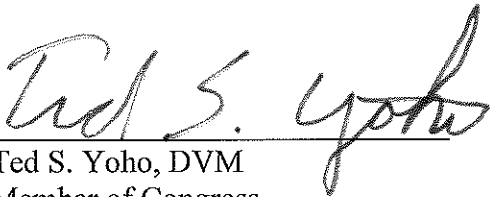
The USDA posted the final rule on the agency’s website on January 13, 2017, with a press release announcing that it would be published in the Federal Register in the coming days. Unfortunately, the Obama Administration failed to publish the rule in a timely manner. While the Federal Register displayed this rule in advance on January 19, 2017, its official publication was not scheduled to occur until January 24, 2017. Pursuant to the memo issued on January 20, 2017, by White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus to all federal agencies, the USDA withdrew the rule on January 23, 2017. It is unfortunate that a clerical error led to the finalized rule having to be withdrawn. We request that your Administration finalize the work already performed

during the previous Congress, so as not to duplicate efforts, and consider expediting its reintroduction and finalization along with publication in the Federal Register.

We further urge you to support the PAST Act, legislation introduced largely to strengthen the USDA's regulatory program for the HPA. The PAST Act complements the rulemaking – codifying key reforms to end the failed system of industry self-policing. The PAST Act had the broad bipartisan cosponsorship of two-hundred and seventy-three Members of the House and fifty Members of the Senate in the 114th Congress. This legislation is endorsed by hundreds of groups, including the American Horse Council and more than sixty other national and state horse groups, AVMA, AAEP, state veterinary groups in all fifty states, the National Sheriffs' Association, and the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and very much hope you will help us in the decades-long fight to end horse soring. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



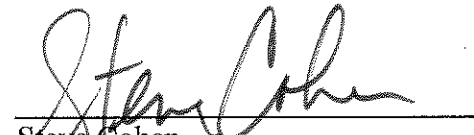
Ted S. Yoho, DVM  
Member of Congress



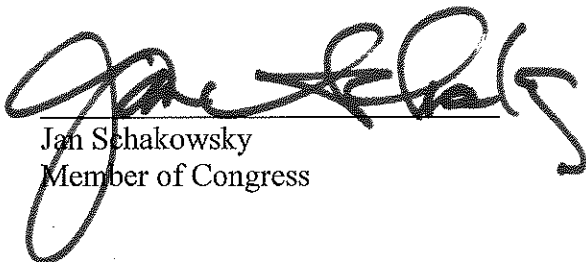
Kurt Schrader, DVM  
Member of Congress



Tom Marino  
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress

Additional co-signers:

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