

## **Horse Protection Amendments Act**

The bill would establish a single HIO that would be responsible for licensing DQPs. The new HIO would be governed by a board consisting of two individuals appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture of Tennessee and two individuals appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture of Kentucky. These four board members would in turn appoint two representatives from the walking horse industry in consultation with the Walking Horse Trainers Association. These six board members would then appoint three additional board members.

The bill would direct the new HIO to use “objective, science-based inspection protocols” that:

- (A) have been the subject of testing and are capable of producing scientifically reliable, reproducible results;
- (B) have been subjected to peer review; and
- (C) have received acceptance in the veterinary or other applicable scientific community.”

The bill would also require the new HIO to issue policies requiring any person licensed with the HIO or an immediate member of such person to be free from conflicts of interest or any association with the industry.

Ninety (90) days after establishment of the new HIO the certification of all existing HIOs would be revoked.

The AHC believes the DesJarlais bill would not effectively address the continued problem of soring in the Tennessee Walking Horse, Racking Horse, or Spotted Saddle Horse industries for the following reasons:

- Unlike the PAST Act, which prohibits action devices, chains, weighted shoes, and pads on the three named breeds, the Blackburn bill does not address action devices, weighted shoes, pads, wedges, hoof bands or other devices that are constructed to artificially alter the gait of Tennessee Walking Horses, Racking Horses, or Spotted Saddle Horses. Such devices are an integral part of soring and facilitate the practice in the “big lick” or performance horse segments of the walking horse industry, usually in conjunction with chemical irritants or substances.
- The American Association Equine Practitioners (AAEP) and the American Veterinarian Medical Association (AVMA) have both called for a ban on the use of action devices and pads or performance packages on Walking Horses because of the role such devices play in the soring process.
- The bill does not increase fines and penalties for soring, which are currently inadequate and fail to discourage or prevent repeat offenders from continuing to sore horses.

- The bill does not prohibit the actual soring of horses and leaves in place only the current prohibition on the showing, transport and sale of sore horses.
- Despite the failure of the current HIO system, the bill would establish by statute the single new HIO of nine individuals that largely retains the current walking horse industry self-policing structure. It would also require the dissolution of all existing HIOs some of which currently prohibit action devices and pads at their shows.
- Furthermore, the USDA currently has the authority to decertify HIOs that are not adequately enforcing the HPA. Under this bill it does not appear USDA would have any recourse if the newly established HIO was failing to enforce the HPA or anyway to remove any of the governing board.