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U.S. Senate
Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

May 19, 2015

RE: Veterinary Support for S. 1121, the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act of 2015

Dear Senator,

I am writing on behalf of the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA), to encourage you to cosponsor S. 1121, the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act. This bill will protect gaited horses from cruel and inhumane soring, an illegal practice inflicted upon Tennessee Walking Horses and other gaited breeds by unscrupulous trainers in order to gain an unfair competitive advantage at horse shows. HSVMA is an association of approximately 7,200 veterinary professionals nationwide, with a focus on the health and welfare of all animals, including horses.

A variety of abusive soring techniques are employed in training specific gaited breeds in order to create pain in the horses' front feet, forcing the horses to shift weight to their hind feet and thus, producing an unnatural gait prized by show judges. Soring techniques include applying caustic chemical agents to the front limbs, sanding down the soles to the point where live tissue is exposed or placing hardened epoxy resins directly into the sensitive part of the hooves. Every time these sored horses put weight on their front feet, they suffer. Sored horses experience chronic pain throughout their careers, are stall-bound except during training, and are denied the ability to socialize with other horses in pastures.

In 1970 Congress enacted the Horse Protection Act to outlaw the practice of soring. However, a 2010 USDA Inspector General's audit documented flagrant ongoing systemic infractions among industry trainers, in large part due to inadequate penalties, deficient oversight and a failed system of industry self-policing. The PAST Act would amend the Horse Protection Act, making many necessary reforms designed to end the practice of soring once and for all.

This legislation has the endorsement of many national veterinary and animal protection organizations. The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) has condemned soaring as “one of the most significant welfare issues faced by the equine industry.” We join our colleagues in the AAEP and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in wholeheartedly endorsing this essential common-sense animal welfare legislation. We strongly urge your individual cosponsorship of this vital bill.

Sincerely,



Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA
HSVMA Veterinary Advisor

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Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association; www.hsvma.org