

There is one reason we are here today, and everyone in this room knows what it is. It is the hidden, illegal training methods of the Tennessee Walking Horse that has been passed down from generation to generation. This is known as "soring". Through the generations, soring was secretly created and promoted by the horse industry to ensure that livelihoods would not be threatened. We all know this goes on, and now we are going to stop this illegal cycle of so-called "training".

I quote former Senator Joe Tydings in his article of March 8, 2012, convicted felon Barney Davis testified that "every TWH that enters into a show ring is sored...they've got to be sore to walk. There ain't no good way to put it, but that's how it is."

We would not be here if the damaging and illegal practice of soring had been abolished by the enforcement of the HPA of 1970 or it's revision in 1976. The United States government should be ashamed for allowing this illegal practice to continue for over 40 years.

The USDA has failed to enforce the HPA at the expense of the horse. While it is obvious that Congress has failed to fully fund the USDA in their efforts, the USDA must improve their enforcement of this act. We need the USDA to be present at all TWH, Racking and Spotted Saddle horse shows where soring is so prevalent. It is unacceptable that the USDA is only able to attend roughly less than 10% of the shows where TWH and gaited breeds are shown. What is this saying about the intentional cover up of this soring? The inspectors write approximately 8 to 22 times more tickets when the USDA is present. Clearly self-regulation by the Horse Industry Organizations does not work. Congress must be pressured for additional funding to oversee and enforce the current law.

Not only has the USDA failed to enforce the HPA, they have failed the horses that silently suffer at the hands of breeders, owners, trainers and riders alike who sore the horse. Far too many of these people continue to illegally inflict excruciating pain on and injure their horses to modify their natural gait in an attempt to win monetary prizes in the show ring and promote their breeding agendas. The horses suffer needlessly at the hands of these people for the chance to make them rich and powerful. These people are glorified undeservingly for the cruelty they impose. This is not acceptable.

The most effective way to eliminate soring is for society to educate themselves about it and stand up to and speak out against this horrific practice. Thanks to our powerful sound horse movement, awareness is growing. We must educate the unknowing public as to what they are actually witnessing at the shows and exhibitions.

In light of the recent conviction of Barney Davis and other indictments in Tennessee, this cruel practice is finally being brought to the forefront of public knowledge. We must continue to educate about the cruelty. We must refuse to sponsor, compete in, or attend the types of horse shows that encourage sored horses to compete. We must boycott companies that sponsor and promote this abuse and reach out to members of Congress by reporting and speaking up for the horse.

Pads, action devices and chains should be outlawed completely. This is where the cruelty is hidden. Stricter limitations are necessary. The natural gait of the TWH should be promoted, not brutally exaggerated for the purpose of entertainment, monetary gain, recognition or to ensure stability of livelihoods. Wealthy owners and their hired trainers seem to believe that it is their cultural right to ignore the law and continue this savage illegal practice.

Mutilation, maiming, torture and stewarding must stop now. Cutting stifles, blinding, and grossly deforming the tail for money and power goes completely against the nature of the horse and should be illegal. Any merciless act upon the horse done to accomplish an exaggerated walk should be illegal.

If the USDA is able to enforce the HPA, we can effectively eliminate the demand for this exaggerated, grossly unnatural walk and therefore stamp out the demand for this to be cheered, promoted and awarded. We can reclaim our wondrous breed the TWH. I challenge all of you here today to BE THE VOICE FOR THE HORSE.

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