

Portion of the Debate on HR 503

AMERICAN HORSE SLAUGHTER PREVENTION ACT -- (House of Representatives - September 07, 2006)

The AHDF had representatives in the House Gallery during the 2006 debate on HR 503. They were struck by some of the testimony and by the fact that AHDF was mentioned during the debate. Very appropriate for AHDF to be mentioned during the debate as it was our founder, Trina Bellak, was responsible for having the first bill introduced to protect horses from slaughter.

We thought we would share the portions of the debate which we enjoyed the most. This information was taken from the Congressional Record. It is NOT all of the testimony presented that day. It simply represents a segment of the debate that we enjoyed the most.

[Time: 13:30]

Madam Chairman, I yield the balance of my time to the chairman of the committee.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I want to point out there is a book called, "Alternatives to Auction and Slaughter: A Guide for Equine Owners (A Better Way)," that lists all kinds of places that welcome animals that are at the end of their lives and are unwanted.

Quite frankly, I find really disingenuous those on the other side who oppose this legislation who say those of us who support ending horse slaughter are actually going to be hurting horses more, that we somehow don't get it. I think that is very disrespectful to the well over 500 organizations that support this bill, including the American Horse Defense Fund, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Animal Protection Institute, the Humane Society of the United States. Clearly, I could go on and on. These are organizations that are in business for the sole purpose of making sure that animals are treated humanely. They are not mistaken in supporting this legislation.

Those of us who truly care about the welfare of horses should support this legislation.

Mr. WHITFIELD. Madam Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In closing, I would say this: The State of Texas tried to close these slaughter houses down for many years. Officials there did. A lawsuit was filed by the slaughter houses. Remember, they are foreign-owned, Belgian, Dutch and French. In that lawsuit, the slaughter houses owned by the foreign companies won that lawsuit because the Federal judge said that this is an interstate commerce issue; and there is Federal preemption involved; and if you are going to shut down slaughter houses in operation in interstate commerce, then the U.S. Congress has to act.

Now this bill came before the Energy and Commerce Committee because of the lack of action on the Ag Committee for many years. They never wanted it to see the light of day.

I would urge Members to vote for H.R. 503. As I have said before, the unwanted horse argument is not a real argument because horses being slaughtered are not unwanted. To think that we would have the responsibility of reimbursing owners who are overbreeding, who have the responsibility to take care of their own horses, they make it appear that the government has that responsibility. Owners have their own responsibility.

Private property rights, this bill protects private property rights. Because of the number of horses being stolen, we are protecting those private property rights.

This bill allows an owner, a rancher or farmer who owns a horse to do whatever he wants to with the horse. He can shoot it or slaughter it and eat it himself. We simply are shutting down an illicit, secretive business, and that is what this bill is all about.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WHITFIELD. Madam Chairman, I yield 2 1/2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Virginia (Mr. *Moran*).

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Chairman, I very much thank the distinguished gentleman from Kentucky for yielding.

I oppose this amendment because it is not about Native Americans. It is about creating one more loophole. And I oppose the other amendments because they would undermine the intent of this bill.

We cannot be a Nation or a society that reduces everything to dollars and cents, that commoditizes everything. When you see an eagle take wing and soar above the clouds, that is not a commodity. It is a source of inspiration. When you see a horse galloping gracefully across the plains, that is not a commodity. That is a source of inspiration.

Horses have been part of the strength of this country for 400 years. We depended upon the horse. We explored this continent. Our commerce was heavily dependent upon the horse. So many major battles where we prevailed were on horses.

Look at our monuments. Look at the monument in front of the Capitol. It is a horse. And when the horse has one leg up, it means that that person was wounded in battle. But there has been an intrinsic relationship.

Everything cannot be reduced to economics. We need to be inspired by some things, and these amendments would gut a bill that says there is no reason to be slaughtering horses. Three major slaughterhouses owned by foreign nations. Americans don't want to consume meat. Listen to the mayor of the city in Texas. It has ruined her economy. It is a stench. No one wants it. This is not about economics. This is about doing the right thing. And we have been tied to the horse, the eagle. These symbols of American strength, of American greatness, are sources of inspiration.

My very good friend Mr. *Whitfield* understands what this is really about. This is about preserving a symbol. We cannot allow the kind of slaughtering that takes place. More than 100,000 horses. Imagine. And the fact is they are slaughtering the healthy, fatter horses that have been well taken care of. They do not want the infirm, the old, the lame horses. That is not who they want to slaughter. So many of these arguments have been false arguments.

[Time: 14:00]

Congresswoman SCHAKOWSKY mentions the AHDF book *Alternatives to Auction and Slaughter* as well as our organization. We are deeply honored and proud that our book could be of such great service to the horses we so deeply love and could prove that many alternatives exist. Our book, first published in 2004, is constantly undergoing updates and is still available on the AHDF website.

Congressman Moran gave such moving testimony that we were moved to tears. His words should not be lost in the vast debate that raged that day. The Congressional Record of the debate lasts for 24 pages. This is why we added it here, it deserved to stand out. Many others spoke with passion on both sides of the issue, but his were so moving and spoke to the soul of the country and the issue of protecting our horses from slaughter.

We want to thank these two legislators, their staff and all of the others from elected officials, to staff, to those who simply care so deeply about the issue. On that day our bill was able to do what many said couldn't be done, which is to see a victorious vote in Congress. We look forward to the day when the bills related to protecting horses pass and become law.