

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 27, 2013

Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association (TWHBEA)
P.O. Box 286
Lewisburg, TN 37091

To whom it may concern:

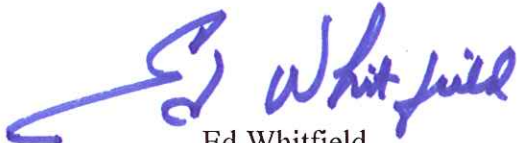
It is my understanding that there has been some misinformation, whether purposely or accidentally, circulated about the impact my legislation, the Prevent All Soring Tactics Act of 2013 (PAST Act), would have on the use of shoes that are used regularly and humanely in the Walking horse industry. I am writing to clear up this misinformation.

Some are saying or making the argument that the section of the bill that addresses the use of “weighted shoes” will make ALL show horse divisions extinct in the Tennessee Walking Horse breed. Their argument maintains that the term “weighted shoes” includes the smallest to the largest of shoes, as all shoes have “weight” to them. This claim is as far away from the truth as possible. The fact is that the PAST Act does not prohibit all horse shoes. It also has no impact on horses ridden on the trail, or anywhere other than a horse show, exhibition, sale or auction. It expressly allows for the use in these venues of shoes that are “protective or therapeutic in nature.” There are many shoes of varying weights that are used on horses by their owners for the protection of the horses’ hooves or for therapeutic purposes. The overwhelming majority of horse shoes used on Tennessee Walking Horses and horses of all breeds are used for these purposes. There are many Tennessee Walking Horses currently being shown in several divisions with shoes that would be allowed under the PAST Act. The determination of the types and weight of shoes that are allowed will be determined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) only after a formal rule making process. This rule making process will require that USDA seek the input of veterinarians, farriers, and other industry participants in the development of the regulations. These regulations will be available for public comment, so everyone will have a chance to weigh in on them before a decision is made.

However, for the three breeds – Tennessee Walking, Racking, and Spotted Saddle Horses – where there are known abuses associated with the use of weighted shoes and hoof bands, the bill makes these abuses unlawful. It has been documented that heavy shoes and hoof bands are regularly used as an integral part of a practice generally known as “pressure shoeing” to cause horses to be sore, which creates an artificial high-stepping gait that is often rewarded in the show ring. The use of these heavy shoes – which rely on hoof bands to help hold them on the horse’s hoof – has also been shown to cause horses’ hooves to be shorn off at the band, causing great pain to the horse and risking serious, potentially permanent, and sometimes fatal damage.

Although this legislation seeks to stop people who are already breaking the law by soring horses, it does not provide a blanket prohibition on all shoes as some would have you believe. As the legislative process moves forward on this bill, I will work hard to ensure that the intent of this legislation is carried out in a way that is not harmful to the people who value Walking horses and do not sore them. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ed Whitfield
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress