

September 7, 2006

SCHAKOWSKY calls for end to horse slaughter

WASHINGTON, DC-U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today hailed the passage of H.R. 503, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, a bill she sponsored and argued in favor of before the successful Floor vote.

Schakowsky's complete statement follows:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 503, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act, which would put an end to the deplorable practice of slaughtering American horses for consumption. □

"As a strong supporter of animal rights, a horse lover, a former horse owner, I have joined with 202 of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle as a cosponsor of H.R. 503.□

"550 national and state organization also support H.R. 503 and I've received over 900 communications from constituents in support of this bill.□ □

"Congress has already expressed its desire to put an end to horse slaughter by voting to amend the FY06 Agriculture Appropriations bill to ban the practice. □ That amendment passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 269 - 158 in the House and 69-28 in the Senate. □ However, the language that passed in both the House and Senate, stating that NO federal dollars could be used to fund the inspection of horse slaughter plants, thus ending the practice, was stripped out. The Republican leadership, in an act of hubris, changed the language in conference to allow for flexibility in interpretation of that ban, and allowed the plants to continue to operate. (This is going against Congressional intent and has been taken to the courts.)□ □

"Congress voted to put an end to horse slaughter in this country because horses are some of the most beautiful and beloved domesticated animals on earth.□ Earlier this year, the story of Barbaro, the Kentucky Derby winner that shattered his leg at the start

of the Preakness transfixed millions of Americans. Since his injury the thoroughbred has received an incredible outpouring of letters, flowers, apples and carrots from Americans across the country. Fans have even made pilgrimages to Barbaro's care facility in Pennsylvania to wish him well in his long recovery. Americans are rooting for Barbaro because they have been inspired with his strength, his beauty, and his strong personality.□

"Americans have long appreciated horses--for transport, on ranches, as police mounts, and as cherished companions. The American Horse Council reports that 1.9 million Americans currently own horses.□ Another 7.1 million Americans are involved in the industry as horse owners, service providers, employees and volunteers, while tens of millions participate in horse events as spectators.□

"These millions of Americans know that horses should be treated with dignity and respect in life and death.□ They are disgusted, as I am that in 2005 over 90,000 horses were slaughtered at three American-based, foreign-owned plants-I stress, foreign-owned plants-so that the meat could be shipped to Europe and Asia for consumption as a delicacy.□ □

"Horses bound for slaughter must endure inhumane conditions on the way to and during slaughter. Horses are shipped, frequently for long distances, in terrible conditions. They are crammed together in trucks built for cattle and pigs. Because of the cramped transport, they are often trampled and some horses arrive at the slaughterhouse seriously injured or dead. Once at the slaughterhouse, horses are often not rendered unconscious before they are killed, as mandated by federal law.□

"Most people assume that all or most of the horses bought for slaughter are old or injured. In fact, according to the USDA Guidelines for Handling and Transporting Equines to Slaughter, 92.3% of horses that arrive at slaughter plants are in "good" condition, meaning they are not injured, lame, overweight, or underweight. □ Healthy animals, pets, and former race horses are all sent to slaughter.□

"We may hear today that it is humane to animals to oppose this bill. But nothing is further from the truth.□

"Earlier I mentioned Barbaro, the Kentucky Derby winner. Ferdinand, winner of the 1986 Derby, faced a very different fate. After his momentous Derby victory Ferdinand was killed for food in a Japanese slaughterhouse in 2002. Just imagine if Barbaro faced the same end. Not surprisingly a recent poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies found that 65% of Americans do not support horse slaughter. And 64% of Americans believe that horses are a companion, like dogs and cats, and killing a horse to eat is not different than killing a cat or dog to eat. I'm sure other members of this body have received hundreds of letters from constituents who oppose horse slaughter and support H.R. 503. "

"I think it's time to listen to the American public and finally end the barbaric practice of horse slaughter by passing H.R. 503. Let's not sign off on Barbaro burgers.

"I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 503. Thank you."