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SCHAKOWSKY SPEAKS OUT TO PROTECT JOCKEYS, WORKERS RIGHTS

WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today spoke out to protect the well-being of horse jockeys and to preserve workers rights at a hearing before the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

Representative Schakowsky's opening statement is below:

Jockeys, exercise riders and other backside workers have long been forced to endure some of the most dangerous and under compensated working conditions of any group of workers in this country.

Today we will focus on the dreadful conditions that these courageous citizens must face every working day. We will also focus on the failures of the current management of the Jockeys Guild to fulfill even the most basic of its purposes - providing for the health and welfare of disabled jockeys. This is a necessary part of the Subcommittee's investigation.

However there is another part that cannot be ignored. The employers are not with us today. The racetracks apparently believe that they have no obligation to injured riders save for a \$100,000 insurance policy that does not begin to address the real cost of permanent disability. They fight any and all attempts to extend the basic right to worker's compensation that the rest of us enjoy and that the state mandates for almost all other employers.

I understand that you will hold at least one more hearing where the owners and managers of tracks including Mountaineer, the track where Gary Birzer suffered his tragic accident last year, will be called to account for the treatment of the workers that make this \$26 billion per year business successful.

I hope before this Subcommittee finishes this important work, we will be able to put together bipartisan recommendations to finally address the injustices that have been the historic characteristic of the business, as opposed to the sport, of horse racing.