

## Congress Addressing Horse Slaughter Cruelty in Federal Legislation

### **Bill would ban transporting horses to foreign slaughterhouses.**

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A large, bipartisan coalition of lawmakers has introduced legislation to stop the export of American horses for butchering in Canada and Mexico, as well as to codify a de facto ban on the slaughter of American horses here in the United States for sale to countries in Europe and Asia.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) introduced the bill known as the Conyers-Burton Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act, and its passage is a top priority for The Humane Society of the United States and other animal welfare and equine rescue organizations, veterinarians and horse industry groups. This bill is similar to legislation passed by the House Judiciary Committee last September.

“Every day that passes means that there will be more torment and more suffering for America’s horses,” said Wayne Pacelle, president and CEO of The Humane Society of the United States. “The horse is an American icon, and it is a betrayal of our responsibility to these animals to treat them like cheap commodities and send them across our borders for slaughter. We ask leaders in Congress for an up or down vote and passage of this critical legislation.”

State legislatures have acted to stop horse slaughter, shuttering the last remaining foreign-owned horse slaughter plants in the U.S. in 2007, and federal courts have upheld those state laws. But Congress has failed to act to stop the export of live horses to Canada and Mexico for slaughter, which is still occurring. More than 86,000 horses were sent across U.S. borders to slaughter in Canada or Mexico in 2008, surpassing the number of exports in 2007.

In the 109th Congress, legislation to stop horse slaughter passed the House of Representatives numerous times by a margin of more than 100 votes, and passed the Senate by a more than two-to-one margin. But in the 110th Congress, prior legislation, H.R. 503, was not enacted because it was blocked by House committee leaders and Western senators. Animal advocates hope the new bill will advance quickly in Chairman Conyers’ House Judiciary Committee.

The HSUS documented cruelty and abuse when investigators followed “killer buyers” transporting horses thousands of miles from auctions to feedlots to interstate highways. They also documented a barbaric method of slaughter on a kill floor in Juarez, Mexico. Recent documentation uncovered by horse welfare advocates demonstrates that the plants in the U.S. were equally inhumane and riddled with gross abuse.

#### Timeline:

May 2005 – U.S. House of Representatives approves the Rahall-Whitfield Amendment to the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations Bill to restore federal protections from commercial sale and slaughter to wild horses and burros. House vote: 249-159. The provision is stripped in conference from the final bill.

June 2005 – U.S. House of Representatives approves the Sweeney-Spratt-Rahall-Whitfield Amendment to the FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Bill to prohibit the use of tax dollars to pay for inspections of horsemeat. House vote: 269-158

September 2005 – U.S. Senate approves the Ensign-Byrd Amendment to the FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Bill to prohibit the use of tax dollars to pay for inspections of horsemeat. Senate vote: 69-28

September 2006 – U.S. House of Representatives passes H.R. 503, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. The 109th Congress adjourns before the Senate can consider the bill. House vote: 263-146

March 2007 – The United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit affirms decision upholding a Texas state law banning the sale of horsemeat for human consumption.

March 2007 - A federal district court orders the U.S. Department of Agriculture to stop inspecting horsemeat at the Cavell International slaughter plant, effectively closing the last operating horse slaughtering operation in the United States.

April 2007 – U.S. Senate Commerce Committee votes 15-7 to approve S. 311 to ban horse slaughter and exports of horses for slaughter.

April 2007 – U.S. House of Representatives passes H.R. 249 to restore a decades-old ban on the commercial sale and slaughter of wild horses first enacted under the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. House vote: 277-137

May 2007 – The U.S. Supreme Court announces that it denies to consider an appeal of the lower court decision upholding Texas’ ban on the sale of horsemeat for human consumption.

May 2007 – Gov. Rod Blagojevich signs H.B. 1711, banning horse slaughter in Illinois.



September 2007 - A three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit unanimously upholds the Illinois state law banning the slaughter of horses for human consumption in that state.  
July 2008 – Chairman John Conyers and Dan Burton introduce H.R. 6598, legislation amending Title 18 to prohibit horse slaughter for human consumption as a form of equine cruelty.  
September 2008 – House Judiciary Committee passes H.R. 6598 by voice vote after majority reject multiple poison pill amendments.