

Equine Welfare Alliance

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislatures Fearful of Federal Ban on Equine Cruelty

CHICAGO, (EWA) – In a vote of callous disregard to suffering, the Montana House of Representatives voted Thursday to bring horse slaughter to the Big Sky State.

Terrified of a ban on horse slaughter at the federal level, animal agriculture organizations such as the U.S. Farm Bureau, and national cattle raisers associations have introduced state bills across the farm belt to show support for returning abattoirs to the US. While most of the bills are little more than non-binding resolutions, a few are truly Draconian.

The Montana bill (H.B.418) would prohibit courts from issuing injunctions against horse slaughter facilities and require expensive bonds and impose penalties on anyone attempting a legal challenge to building a horse slaughter house. Passage of such a bill would be an insult to the memory of the brave men and women who more than 200 years ago fought for everyman's unfettered access to the courts.

Thursday this Draconian bill moved to the Senate Agriculture committee for hearings.

But even as the Montana Senate Agriculture committee listened to the debate, the North Dakota Senate decided similar language in their pro-slaughter bill (HB 1496) was too much and they stripped it out. The language, known as Section I, would have required anyone contesting the construction of a horse slaughter plant to post a bond equal to 20% of the construction cost. As it now stands, their bill provides for \$50,000 to fund a study on the feasibility of building a horse slaughter plant.

While clearly targeted at horse advocates and animal rights activists, the Montana bill would prevent all citizens from challenging the building of a plant in their neighborhoods. Among those arguing for the bill was slaughter advocate Sue Wallis who shrilly warned the committee that it would hear a lot of emotional arguments from the opponents who she said secretly wanted to ban all meat. She went on

to testify how these opponents would eventually deprive American infants of the protein needed for their brains to develop.

The argument, if it wasn't so pitiful, would be laughable. Can any American really believe for a moment that we can give up our love of one of the nation's great institutions, the hamburger? We counter that there will likely always be a McDonalds.

The committee questioned how any plant could currently slaughter horses in the US for human consumption given the most recent farm bill which had removed funding for federally mandated United States Department of Agriculture meat inspections.

To this one of the proponents replied, "The Belgians tell me they can do their own inspections." (The issue of whether such plants could pay for their own inspections was contested in the courts in 2007 and the courts ruled they could not.)

Among the opponents was Paula Bacon, the former mayor of Kaufman, Texas who told of her prolonged fight to rid her town of the Dallas Crown slaughter plant. Bacon provided the committee with documentation of the years of pollution and other problems her town suffered from blood backing up into bathtubs to a nearby hospital that was forced to install air filtration because of stifling odors. Other opponents to the bill objected strictly on the basis that it deprived the citizens of their legal rights.