

December 14, 2008

To: Representative Dave Sigdestad
Representative Sue Wallis

RE: NCSL Horse Slaughter Resolution

The resolution you introduced at the NCSL meeting is an abomination. As Dr. Phil would say, "Let's get real."

The resolution states that Europe and Asia are a willing market for the US horse industry. How can this be a US industry when there is NO market for the product in the US? Why were the plants owned by Belgium and France? With your rationale, we should also allow slaughter houses for our dogs and cats to satisfy Asian wants. Livestock are defined as food animals. Livestock designations for horses are being removed state by state with most states charging tax on feed for horses but not for livestock. Perhaps it is because we do not eat our horses, dogs or cats. Since when did America become responsible for satisfying the culinary delights of foreign countries? It is disgusting and appalling that you would even suggest offering horse meat for sale in America.

My first question to the authors of this resolution is—if there is surplus of horses, what is the cause and why isn't that being addressed in the resolution? Do you not have to identify the root cause before arriving at a resolution? *Horse slaughter is a symptom of the cause, not a cure.* According to the USDA, the number one breed of horse going to slaughter is the Quarter Horse. Are you aware that the AQHA brings over 135,000 foals into the population every year? That is over 35,000 more than the number of horses being slaughtered and over 100,000 more than the next most frequently bred horse, Thoroughbreds. How will slaughter correct that behavior? If slaughter is needed to manage their business, they are over-breeding. Perhaps they should breed for quality, not quantity.

Your resolution removes accountability for abuse and neglect. An owner can abuse his horse, dump him at a slaughter auction and never be held accountable for his actions. Slaughter and the slaughter auctions encourage irresponsible behavior and then provide a reward to the owner for dumping his horse. Is this what our humane nation has become? How much longer are we going to allow this unacceptable behavior and reward it?

The proposed resolution is compilation of twisted information, half-truths or outright inaccurate statements. The resolution points offer no perspective of the context in relation to the overall picture. Below are several of the more glaring distortions of the truth.

...they are losing \$42M in direct income from loss of by-products. According to the American Horse Council, the combined direct and indirect US Horse Industry income is \$150 Billion. \$42M is a mere rounding factor.

...horse values are down because of the closure of the slaughter plants. This is absurd. My house value is down, my car value is down, my possessions have lost value so why would the value of horses be impervious to the current economy?

...horse slaughter plants were highly regulated. This is an outright lie. The regulations were meager, at best and in no way resembled livestock regulations. Regulations had no chain of ownership, no health papers, no drug testing and did not check for stolen horses. Microchips and lip tattoos were not read. The microchips were removed so the meat would not be tainted.

...humane horse slaughter plants. This is probably the most distorted comment. There is no such thing as humane horse slaughter. The latest FOIA received from the USDA on the former Beltex plant in Texas will remove any doubt that the pro slaughter advocate's mantra claiming that the US plants were humane, are false. The report is 906 pages with the most horrific images I've ever seen. If you would like to view the report, it is on my website <http://www.vickitobin.com/id24.html> titled *Horse Transport Violations at the Beltex Plant from Animals' Angels*. More importantly, there were no consequences for any violations that were committed. Most recently, the owner of Sugarcreek Auction was fined for violations of the Commercial Transportation of Equines for Slaughter Act. Horse slaughter is animal abuse at its worst.

- Have you read the 1958 Humane Slaughter Act? It states that an animal must be rendered senseless with one blow. Since horse slaughter cannot comply with the statute, by virtue of the act, horse slaughter is illegal. There are mounds of documentation and testimony. Even the pro slaughter AVMA states that a horse's head must be restrained for the bolt to be effective. The documentation is valid and cannot be dismissed. The FOIA report is from the USDA so we cannot be accused us of doctoring videos or exaggerating the facts.

...there aren't affordable and economic alternatives to disposal and the ecosystem will be destroyed. There is an alternative. It is called humane euthanasia. The cost is no more than one month's care for a horse. If they can afford to own a horse, they can afford humane euthanasia and disposal. Most states offer low cost euthanasia through veterinary colleges, local departments of Agriculture and other agencies as well as rescues. The pro slaughter advocates do not want to avail themselves to anything but slaughter because they want to be paid to dispose of their horse. The owners of over 750,000 horses provide humane deaths for their horses with no impact to the ecosystem. The number of horses being slaughtered represents 1% of the horse population.

...horses are being abandoned on public lands and increasing costs to tax payers. I am assuming this is in regard to the wild horse issue that you also address later in the resolution. The only animals on public lands that don't belong there are cattle. The BLM has caused the issues. There are 6 MILLION privately owned cattle on Federal land. Remove the cattle, return the wild horses to their designated land and the problem is solved. They are rounding up horses to make room for more cattle, not because of horse welfare issues. There are 19 million acres. Do you expect us to believe that several hundred acres per horse is an issue or that 30,000 horses are doing more damage than 6 million cattle? We have investigated many of the claims of abandoned horses and most were proven false. The documentation of the investigations is also available on my website on the bottom of this page <http://www.vickitobin.com/id18.html> titled *Deleting the Fiction*.

...there are in excess of 100,000 unwanted horses. Where is the proof? That is the number of horses being slaughtered not the number of unwanted horses. Are we to assume that because a horse is slaughtered it is unwanted? Are the stolen horses going to slaughter unwanted? Are the horses unwanted when bids from non kill buyers are ignored or the horses are sent directly to the kill pen without being run through the auction?

...horses without value and unmarketable horses will be exposed to potential abandonment and neglect. So, we should slaughter them as a preventative? Please explain the abandonment/abuse that occurred when the domestic plants were open or the current claims since anyone wishing to send their horse to slaughter can still do so. If they are unmarketable and have no value, why do the owners expect to be compensated for disposal?

...the rescues are full. This is not true. I'm sure this is in regard to a survey that was conducted when we were working on HR 6598. I would ask that you produce the list of rescues surveyed and the method used of choosing the rescues. All the callers asked was how many horses they had room for at the rescue. If the rescue said none, they hung up. The rescues we polled said the callers would not engage in conversation. Had they listened they would have discovered that because a rescue was full, it didn't mean they couldn't take in more horses. They have foster homes, neighboring farms and other rescues they network with to provide homes.

...horse transportation was highly regulated. Again, not true. The double decker law was ignored and was evidenced by several trailer accidents; all involving double deckers. The FOIA from the USDA on Beltex also confirms the transport was never humane as well as the violations at Sugarcreek, New Holland and other auctions.

...the exports have increased and the foreign facilities are not humane. Why wasn't this an issue when the domestic slaughter houses were open? Thousands of horses were exported every year and the pro slaughter advocates didn't have an issue then, why now? The documentation proves that horse slaughter is never humane—no matter where it occurs.

Horse slaughter is a predatory business based on supply and demand, not a service being performed, as the resolution would lead you to believe. Establishing horse slaughter houses to accommodate the lowest common denominator in the industry is a travesty. Race tracks are working with us on adoption programs, retirement programs and are adopting a zero tolerance on slaughter. New humane facilities/shelters are opening and many projects are underway. Exactly what are the pro slaughter advocates doing to help, other than calling for more slaughter? It's time the small minority of irresponsible owners and breeders take responsibility for their horses. The breed and dump behavior is perpetuated and rewarded by slaughter.

Americans are overwhelmingly opposed to horse slaughter and it is a disgrace to our nation that we allow this to continue. Horse slaughter is a black eye on America. Rest assured, you will never see another slaughter house operating in the US. Never. And we **will** close our borders to horse slaughter with the 111th Congress.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your response.
