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**Testimony before the
United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources**

**Hearing on H.R. 1018, the ROAM Act
Tuesday, March 3, 2009**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of H.R. 1018 and wild horses, an issue very near and dear to my heart.

My name is Madeleine Pickens, and I am a lifelong equestrian and animal lover. My husband, T. Boone Pickens, and I keep horses on our ranch in Texas, and I have had the good fortune and privilege to have bred and raced multiple champion race horses, including the famed Cigar, over the years. I am also keenly interested in wild horses and burros, and therefore am grateful for the opportunity to testify before the committee today on H.R. 1018, the Restoring Our American Mustangs (ROAM) Act, and to share some of my wild horse proposal with the. I commend Chairman Nick Rahall and Subcommittee Chairman Raul Grijalva for their willingness to lead on this issue. I know you are both true wild horse champions.

I want to share with the Committee details of a project I have been pursuing for several months now that could significantly assist the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) policies and practices when it comes to America's wild horses and burros and which should be considered as the Committee reviews H.R. 1018.

For some time now I have been in discussions with the BLM regarding the establishment of a private sanctuary for wild horses. This will be the same program I would like to expand on for burros as we move forward, for they too deserve protection. The wild horse sanctuary would receive and care for some 30,000 wild horses currently in short- and long-term holding facilities, thereby saving the BLM, and the American taxpayer, approximately \$700 million by 2020. At a time when the country is facing growing economic difficulties and the federal budget is increasing dramatically, a proposal to save hundreds of millions of dollars while ensuring the survival of a national treasure should be a welcome opportunity. It is time to think

big about how we can improve the Wild Horse and Burro Program, both operationally and legislatively.

I first became interested in the plight of wild horses and burros when working with others to end the slaughter of American horses, a campaign I know both Chairman Grijalva and Chairman Rahall strongly support. These are magnificent creatures, a true American icon, and they should be treasured and preserved. The more I learned of their management by BLM, however, the more despondent and frustrated I became. It makes no sense, either from a fiscal or humane perspective, to manage a program to the point where more horses are in holding than are on the range, and where the proportion of animals in captivity to those in the wild will only increase as the years go on. It doesn't make sense for the horses, and it doesn't make sense for everyday Americans who are footing the bill.

I have put forward a very serious proposal to the BLM to establish a 501(c)(3) eco-sanctuary for all horses currently in holding facilities. I have been actively seeking appropriate land with sufficient forage, water sources, and more. The animals will be free-roaming and able to form natural bands. While the primary objective of the project is to care for these wonderful creatures, we will also be stewards of the land.

In short, the opportunity we are presenting to the BLM should be used to improve their image and the public's perception of the wild horse and burro program. I was not born in the United States, but from the time I was a little girl I dreamed of coming to this incredible country. I was filled with visions of the Wild West, where horses roamed free and individuals such as John Wayne exemplified an image of strong yet compassionate people. Probably no other image around the world symbolizes America like that of the wild horse. Over the past year I have been inundated with media inquiries about my proposal from the United States and all around the world— including documentaries, newspapers, radio, and television from Germany, France, Sweden, Australia, the Czech Republic, England, and Japan. They are captivated by and curious about the thought and imagery of America's natural history. They don't have such a wild and romantic past. While England may have the tales of Henry the VIII and his wives, and France may have had Napoleon and Josephine, we in America were blessed to have had Lewis and Clark, cowboys and Indians, the Pony Express and wild horses. These great individuals and the stories of the West are not mythical; they are real. They are the fabric that made up America. We need to respect our history and respect our God-given heritage.

I also want to emphasize my utter support for language included in H.R. 1018 that would overturn the Burns Rider, thereby restoring protections included in the original 1971 Act that were designed to prevent the slaughter of America's wild horses and burros. It is crucial that these protections be reinstated so as to ensure that our mustangs never have to endure the horrors of slaughter. No horse, wild or otherwise, should be brutally butchered for human consumption.

In closing, I want to thank Chairman Rahall and Chairman Grijalva for their leadership in seeing that America's wild horses and burros are treated with dignity and respect. I also wish to thank the entire committee for the opportunity to share with you the proposal I am putting forward to assist with this situation. The sanctuary I am seeking to create will be good for America's wild horses and burros, good for American taxpayers and good for the BLM. If this can be rolled out in tandem with some of the legislative fixes included in H.R. 1018, we will have an opportunity to effect real change and I look forward to working with you in this endeavor. While other countries have their history in books and museums, our history is a living museum. Let's allow the American people to have the chance to enjoy and experience these reminders of our history which are alive and well today roaming the West. Let children from big cities have the opportunity to view the treasures right here in the United States, encourage our Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to come and experience nature and its inhabitants. Let everyone see and appreciate the foundation upon which our great nation was established, by ensuring wild horses are protected and enjoyed forever. Let share this with the world.