

animal
wellness
action

September 21, 2022

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
U.S. House Subcommittee on Consumer Commerce and Protection
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
U.S. House Subcommittee on Consumer Commerce and Protection
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

I write today with thanks to you for affording the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 5441, the opportunity to be marked up in the Full House Energy and Commerce Committee. As the Subcommittee record shows, I served as an expert witness the first time the legislation saw action, then as H.R. 1518, in November of 2013. My testimony came less than a year after I had served two terms as president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' and Exhibitors' Association (2010-2012), the breed registry established in 1935 in Lewisburg, Tennessee.

Over the past 40 years, there has been no more important issue to me than to see the Tennessee Walking Horse regain its rightful position as America's horse – the horse that John Wayne, Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, and Elvis Presley once rode.

My late friend Sen. Joseph D. Tydings, D-Maryland, authored the Horse Protection Act of 1970 that PAST seeks to amend, and following my testimony in 2013, I worked for the original sponsor of the bill, Rep. Ed Whitfield, R-Kentucky, and secured 307 cosponsors in the 113th Congress as well as 60 cosponsors on the Senate companion bill led by Sens. Kelly Ayotte, R-New Hampshire, and Mark Warner, D-Virginia. Today's markup will be the first time this legislation has seen action before the full House Energy and Commerce Committee since it was first introduced 10 years ago.

Animal Wellness Action
611 Pennsylvania Ave. S.E. #136 | Washington, D.C. 20003
Helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty.

Sen. Tydings gave me some very specific instructions before he passed away in 2018 in order to see his 1970 law effectively enforced, and those instructions have been executed through my actions and the actions of the Citizens' Campaign Against Big Lick Animal Cruelty, the grassroots effort on the ground in the southeastern U.S., to this day.

Thanks to the support of many Members on the Committee from both sides of the aisle, and a new House rule that allowed the measure to avert Committee action in 2019 with more than 290 cosponsors, the bill passed the House by a vote of 333 to 96 with all Democrats and the majority of Republicans supporting the bill. Unfortunately, Republican leadership in the House opposed the measure in 2019, and due to that opposition, and the opposition of the Senators from Tennessee and Kentucky, the bill died in the Senate.

We attempted to pass compromise legislation that married the PAST Act with alternative legislation led by Members of Congress from those two states that was supported by leaders in the Tennessee Walking Horse breed, Sen. Tydings' family, and countless other groups, but that compromise effort failed due to opposition from the Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society Legislative Fund.

This issue has truly taught me the political lesson of a lifetime, and there's been no other legislation I have advocated for that has been as difficult to pass as this one, despite the overwhelming support across so many sectors. Those same obstacles still remain in the Senate in 2022.

It is encouraging however to see the PAST Act reach this milestone today and I do both hope and pray that we will somehow find a way to get the PAST Act enacted as it is written or with amendments, and I hope Members from both sides of the aisle in both chambers will be open to working with us to finally get the PAST Act over the finish line in some form.

Personally, I have sacrificed more for this legislation and the cause to end soring than anything else in my entire life. The sacrifices I made and story of my journey was shared in 2020 with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who just passed away on September 8 and who had a heart for horses like my own. As a result of her reading about my work, the Queen honored me in August of 2020 with an award recognizing my "extraordinary efforts to reduce violence in the training of horses." Over the past few weeks, we have all seen how much the world loved Queen Elizabeth II, and how much she loved horses. It was quite evident in the final hour before she was laid to rest when the procession approached her pony Emma, saddled and ready to pay her final tribute to the Queen at Windsor Castle, the very place Her Majesty's award was mailed from.

I wanted to add this context because while I know the late queen could not influence legislation in the U.S. as a foreign leader, she was very well aware of the PAST Act, the issue of soring, and the abuse the Tennessee Walking Horse has endured since the 1950s, and she very deeply wanted to see this end. It persisted for nearly her entire reign, and I believe enactment of the PAST Act would be a great gesture to honor both Queen Elizabeth II and Senator Tydings as well. Tydings' love of horses was quite like our own, and he was one of the last to ride and serve in the U.S. Calvary where he saw our American horses defend our nation and give their lives just as many soldiers did.

For the House Subcommittee hearing and markup on the PAST Act earlier this year I submitted several letters and articles documenting the historical timeline of the past 10 years of our work on this issue, and I have included additional articles and news stories today with this letter for the record that have been published since the Subcommittee markup several months ago. I believe it is important to maintain this timeline for future efforts.

I ask only that you please include this letter and these articles in the Congressional record today and do hope you and the other Members of the Committee from both sides of the aisle will advance the PAST Act through the Committee today.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marty Irby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marty" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Irby".

Marty Irby
Executive Director
Animal Wellness Action



CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

Elizabeth wanted to be a horse when she grew up. Instead, she helped them as queen.

We will honor her death by working harder than ever to stamp out the abusive practices used on horses.



Then-Princess Elizabeth with a pony in Windsor Great Park, Berkshire on April 21, 1939
Central Press/Getty Images

Sept. 15, 2022, 4:30 AM EDT

By Marty Irby, executive director, Animal Wellness Action

Queen Elizabeth II wasn't expected to be the monarch. She was born third in line to the throne, with her uncle Edward VIII the heir apparent. Which might explain why, when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, she answered: "I should like to be a horse."

Elizabeth didn't get her wish. Instead, her uncle abdicated, and her father became king. She then ascended the throne at age 25 when her father died in 1952. Until her death at 96, she continued to be devoted to horses.

The queen might well have been born with a love of horses, but no doubt the Shetland pony her father gave her at age 4 brought that love to light. She frequently rode with trainer Terry Pendry, even doing so a few months ago. She often attended the Royal Windsor Horse Show and until 1986 rode horseback at the Trooping of the Colour. And in a moment that reminds us how very

human she was, one of her happiest moments was clearly the day in 2013 when her very own [horse Estimate won the Royal Ascot](#), one of the most prominent equine events in Britain.

This passion for horses is one that I share with her, and it has been central to why I've felt so much grief since her passing Thursday. I've burst into tears at least a dozen times this past week. I wish I were able to be in London to join members of the public [paying their respects](#) ahead of her funeral. In lieu of that, on Monday I headed to the British Embassy in Washington, where I live, to sign the book of condolences.

It's been quite strange to have such deep feelings of loss as an American who's never set foot in the United Kingdom. But I've always felt drawn to Queen Elizabeth. I grew up watching her on television and knew who she was long before I knew the name of the U.S. president. Like the [Cullinan diamond](#), which graces the top of the [Sovereign's Scepter With Cross](#), Queen Elizabeth II was to so many people around the globe our rock and the brightest shining star on our planet.



Queen Elizabeth II at the third day of the Royal Windsor Horse Show at Home Park in Windsor, England, on May 15, 2004. Carl De Souza / Getty Images

Part of this connection is no doubt due to a family heritage that traces to William Irby, the 1st Baron of Boston, England, born in 1707. And partly it's my confirmation in the Episcopal Church within the [Anglican Communion](#), which she headed. And partly it's the time I spent living in the British Commonwealth islands of the Bahamas in my 20s.

But above all, my emotional response has been shaped by one particular bond we shared: a tremendous love for horses, the voiceless icons upon whose backs much of our civilization was built.

So you can imagine how I felt on a rainy August evening in 2020 when a package arrived on my doorstep in Washington marked “Royal Mail” from “Windsor Castle.”

Some months before, my dear friend [Monty Roberts, one of Her Majesty’s confidants](#), had asked me to prepare a document about my life’s work protecting horses. I was grateful for the opportunity and wrote a seven-page story titled “[A Paradigm Shift](#),” which shared the tale of how my own life crumbled as a result of my efforts to end horse abuse.



Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip visit a farm on the Balmoral estate in Scotland around September 1972 during their Silver Wedding anniversary year.

Fox Photos/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

I had been steeped in the show horse industry and had served as president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders’ & Exhibitors’ Association. Then I testified before Congress about horse abuse in support of legislation to end it. I was shunned so intensely that I was forced to file for bankruptcy, my wife and I divorced, and my father and I didn’t speak for more than five years.

When Monty told me he had presented my story to the queen and she’d read every word, it restored my strength and validated all I’d done. I took further solace and motivation from the contents of the package that arrived from England. [It contained](#) a certificate of recognition [from](#)

[the queen](#) for my “extraordinary efforts to reduce violence in the training of horses.” It was hand-signed by Her Majesty.

Far too many horse owners and riders take shortcuts and use brutality in training to rush a horse through the process, instead of being patient and working with the horse on its own terms. Monty, however, pioneered training principles and methods that are built on the language of horses themselves. They are nonviolent and use true communication with the animals to win their trust. It’s something Monty says makes them want to do what the human asks, instead of being forced.

The queen met [Monty](#) in 1989 and later became a patron of his [nonprofit group, Join-Up International](#), dedicated to promoting “gentle, effective alternatives to violence” in both equine and human relationships. She even asked him to demonstrate his methods with her horses.

I worked with Monty myself when we joined other horse welfare advocates in working over six years to enact the [Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act](#) in the U.S., which was signed into law in December 2020. The measure banned race-day medication and created a uniform national set of rules and standards for horse racing in the U.S. Monty told me the queen was thrilled with its passage.

She was also aware of the work we’ve done to end the [soring of walking horses](#), a despicable practice that produces an artificial high step, known as the “Big Lick,” that’s prized and rewarded at horse shows in the Southeastern U.S. Soring induces pain via chemicals such as mustard oil, croton oil or diesel fuel or by inserting sharp objects into horses’ hooves. Then large, stacked shoes and ankle chains are placed around the horses’ feet to aggravate the pain and make the horse step higher. I’d liken it to running across hot coals barefoot.

The abhorrent practice [has persisted in the Southeastern U.S.](#) for nearly as long as the queen reigned, but a [recent victory in a federal court of appeals](#) could end the use of the grotesque torture devices of stacked shoes and ankle chains.

We will not give up. We will honor the queen by working harder than ever to stamp out this and other abusive practices, execute her charge and see horses set free from all this violence.

Marty Irby is a former eight-time world champion equestrian who currently serves as the executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington, D.C., and was [recently honored by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II](#) for his work to protect horses.

[This Alabama equestrian had a unique connection with Queen Elizabeth II](#)

Published: Sep. 18, 2022, 8:56 p.m.



Queen consort Camilla, Queen Elizabeth, II and Monty Roberts. Courtesy of Monty Roberts.

By Rebecca Griesbach | rgriesbach@al.com

A Mobile-born equestrian says his love for horses has given him things he could never imagine – including a 17-year friendship with **Queen** Elizabeth II's closest cowboy confidants.

The queen, [who died on Sept. 8](#), was [known for her love of Corgis](#). But Marty Irby, an Alabama native and lobbyist for animal rights, says her passion for horses may go even deeper.

The late queen owned more than 100 horses by the time of her death, according to news reports. And she was also a strong advocate for their humane treatment in the U.K. and America, Irby said.

“My emotional response has been shaped by one particular bond we shared: a tremendous love for horses, the voiceless icons upon whose backs much of our civilization was built,” Irby [wrote in an NBC article](#) ahead of the queen’s funeral on Sunday.

‘There is a better way’

As the son of a horse trainer and the grandson of a veterinarian, Irby, 43, was competing in Alabama horse shows by the age of four.

“Horses I think are just in my DNA,” he said. “I cannot even remember even learning how to ride a horse. It’s like walking or talking.”

Irby quickly found himself immersed in an equestrian lifestyle, where he was frequently attending horse competitions, and even selling horses to big-name buyers, by the time he was a teenager. Through the years, he said grew more and more alarmed at some of the practices he noticed trainers using to maintain a highly manicured image.

Irby was 13 when he witnessed “soring” for the first time.

The practice often involved applying caustic chemicals like mustard oil or diesel fuel or inserting sharp objects into the horse’s hooves to intentionally inflict pain and make the horses hike their legs higher.

The exaggerated gait is called a “Big Lick,” and it’s most commonly seen in Tennessee Walking Horses, but is also used with Alabama’s state horse, called the racking horse. “I saw this growing up as a teenager and had always had a love for horses and you know, just had this feeling this was terribly wrong,” Irby said.

Around that time, the Mobile teenager had sold a horse to Bill Johnson, the founder of the Ritz Carlton Hotel. Johnson eventually became Irby’s mentor and invited him to work on his farm in Shelbyville, Tennessee after college.

There, Irby met renowned horse trainer Monty Roberts, who spent several years working for Queen Elizabeth II.

The queen met Roberts in 1989 and later became a patron of his nonprofit group, Join-Up International, which is dedicated to promoting “gentle, effective alternatives to violence” in both equine and human relationships. She later asked him to demonstrate his methods with her horses.

Irby read a book about Roberts and lent it to Johnson, who was able to track Roberts down through his network of royal connections, Irby said. Roberts eventually agreed to travel to the U.S. to work with Johnson’s horses.

“If he’s good enough for Queen Elizabeth, he’s good enough for me,” Irby recalled Johnson saying.

Roberts had developed a language he called “equus” that he observed by watching wild horses on a range out west and used that to pioneer a unique set of training principles.

Irby said he was mesmerized by the way Roberts could prep untrained horses for riding in as little as 30 minutes without using any violence or pressure of any kind.

The two instantly became friends.

“We have to give people the opportunity to see something different,” Irby said. “I spent the first 26 years of my life thinking there was only just one way to do it. The moment I saw that, the world changed.”

Path to advocacy

After working on Johnson’s ranch, Irby spent a few years volunteering with the Tennessee Walking Horse industry, and later became president of the breed registry in 2010. While he was president, the U.S. Humane Society [shot an undercover video](#) of a trainer in West Tennessee brutally beating and torturing a horse.

So he spoke out in support of legislation against horse cruelty – a stance that he said he was “shunned intensely” for, and had even received death threats later on.

“I ended up losing my business, having to file bankruptcy, getting divorced – it was like a country music song,” he said. “But I wouldn’t trade that for anything.”

After testifying in front of Congress against , Irby began a nine-year stint as a lobbyist in Washington, D.C.

A self-described “meat-eating Republican,” Irby says he’s been able to pass a record number of animal rights bills by building strong relationships with big-name politicians and activists – including Laura Trump and Carole Baskin.

“I don’t think I would have been able to accomplish even 20 or 30% of that if my politics weren’t as they are and if I didn’t work with both sides of the aisle,” he said.

Through his friendship with Roberts, Irby was able to keep the Queen apprised of his work.

Though she couldn’t influence U.S. legislation, he said she was quietly supportive of his efforts, such as the Horse Racing Integrity and Safety Act, which was passed in 2020 and just took effect in July.

The bill bans doping in American horse racing and created a uniform national standard for all 50 states to follow.

“They don’t have all the problems in the UK that we have here [with horse racing],” he said. “She really wanted to see that change.”



Marty Irby, an Alabama born animal rights lobbyist, signs a book of condolences at the British Embassy in memory of Queen Elizabeth II.

Photo courtesy of Marty Irby

A royal honor

In August of 2020, Irby opened his door to find a piece of royal mail from Windsor Castle. It was an award from Queen Elizabeth [recognizing Irby's efforts](#) to reduce violence in horse training – and for his use of Roberts' methods.

“Marty Irby is our hero and has paid a huge price in his own life in the interest of being fair to the horses,” Roberts told the local news in 2020. “Along with thousands of supporters, Her Majesty and I strongly recommend the necessary rules and regulations to eliminate violence from this breed and all other competitions involving the horses we love.”

Less than 20 people around the world have received the honor, which was only given out in 2020 and 2012. Irby was invited to Buckingham Palace to receive the award, but COVID halted the ceremony.

Though he's never met the queen or spoken to her in person, Irby said her death is weighing heavily on him.

“I'm more motivated than ever to carry out what she wanted me and Monty and others to do, and that's to spread the message and these principles to stop horse abuse,” he said.

Aside from a documentary on wild horses, Irby is currently working to get to major pieces of legislation passed: The Big Cat Public Safety Act and FDA Modernization Act, which repeals a mandate that requires animal testing for getting a drug approved by the FDA.

Congressman Barry Moore from Dothan is a co-sponsor on the animal testing bill, and, Irby said, is one of his key supporters from Alabama – a state that has been one of his “toughest delegations” to win over on animal rights, he said.

He’s also [continuing the fight](#) against cockfighting in Alabama, and is hopeful a newer class of legislators will be more receptive to his efforts.

“I think growing up and living [in a rural area] really gave me a unique perspective of how integral these animals are to people’s lives,” he said. “There’s such a polarizing tone that we’ve seen where people kind of view things either as you’re for torturing animals or your not or you’re for hurting animals or you’re not.

“There’s so many people out there who don’t even realize what they’re doing, and they don’t understand that it’s abuse, they don’t understand that it’s wrong. And that’s where Monty Roberts and Queen Elizabeth come into play, and that’s helping spread the word and the message that there is a better way.”

SIGHT

Conversations: Marty Irby, animal advocate, on horses, his faith and the Queen

19 September 2022

BY DAVID ADAMS

Marty Irby, a former eight-time world champion equestrian, is the executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington, DC. He spoke via email about his work, faith and what the recognition of Queen Elizabeth II - who honoured him for his work with horses in 2020 - has meant...

What is Animal Wellness Action all about?

"Animal Wellness Action is a 501c-4 non-profit based in Washington, DC, formed in 2018 to help *animals* by influencing legislation and policy shaping animal protection and welfare laws to ensure better lives for wild and captive animals."

What specially are you advocating for?

"Currently we are working to ensure strict enforcement of the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act in the United States that was signed into law in 2020 and took effect on July 1, 2022. The measure banned race-day doping and created a new national authority, the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority, to establish and oversee national standards in American horse racing."



Marty Irby with foals at his family farm in Shelbyville, Tennessee in 2013. PICTURE: Courtesy of Marty Irby

"In addition, we continue to work to stamp out the painful practice of 'soring' Tennessee Walking Horses that's utilised to induce a pain-based artificial high-step known as the 'Big Lick' by applying chemicals such as mustard oil, diesel fuel, croton oil, and other caustic chemicals and inserting sharp objects in the horses' feet. Large, stacked shoes and ankle chains are then placed on the horses' feet to exacerbate the pain. I'd like[n] it to running over hot coals barefoot. This practice has persisted in the US since the 1950's.

"Furthermore, we continue to work to end the slaughter of equines all around the globe. Horses from many countries around world are slaughtered and served up as slabs of meat for dinner and we owe these icons [upon] whose backs most of our civilization was built upon. [They deserve] better treatment than to be used up, shipped to slaughter, and shot in the head with a bolt gun to kill them. These are flight animals that are forced to endure terrible conditions in transport and countless 'kill pens', they're kept in to hold until shipped or slaughtered. It's a terrible injustice."

I understand your advocacy for horses has come at a considerable cost?

"Yes, after speaking out and rallying the breed registry for Tennessee Walking Horses to vote in support of legislation known as the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act that would end the

painful practice of soring by banning those large, stacked horse shoes and ankle chains, I was shunned by my own family and most everyone in the horse world I had known since birth. My wife and divorced, I lost my business at the time, was forced to file for bankruptcy, had countless death threats and threats of violence against me, and my father and I didn't speak for more than five years. I testified about this before the US Congress and met fierce enemies who still threaten me to this very day.

"There are few defining moments in a person's life, and that was the single most important defining moment of mine. I knew the price I would pay but didn't realise how vicious the attacks would be. One man, George Lee Lennox, tried to stop this abuse in the 1970's and he was murdered for it. I do not and have never regretted that decision as it brought me to Washington, DC, where I live today and am fulfilling God's purpose for my life protecting horses and ending violence in horse training – a purpose Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was very well aware of."

Where did your love of horses come from?

"That love is something I was born with and is a love that Queen Elizabeth II shared as well. My grandfather was a veterinarian, my father a horse trainer, and the generations of the Irby family before were full of horsemen and women as well. I cannot remember learning how to ride a horse; it's the same to me as having the ability to walk and talk, and I have never cared or loved anything on this earth more than the horses. I lived through a terrible childhood and the horses saved me, they were my strength, and they healed me and fueled a power within me that I cannot describe. It is my duty and my honour to repay them by helping all horses on this planet."

IN SHORT - MARTY IRBY

A Scripture that's special to me

"Psalm 23:4-5 - 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.' I do not fear much at all because of these verses, and I have lived much of my life afraid of very few things...I am only afraid of not fulfilling my mission, and in that very fear it is that I rely on this Scripture and prayer. God has and will always provide more than enough if we are faithful and believe."

A person I admire

"Well, that's an easy one: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and it is because she is truly the greatest horse protector of all time. There has been no one else with her stature and power, but more importantly her love, that has affected more equine lives for the better in our known world history from my view."

A place where I like to spend time

"I'd like to spend a few days just brushing, riding a horse, and cleaning some horse stalls while I think for a few days, that's about as good as it can be for the soul, and I rarely have the opportunity these days. "

Tell us a bit about your personal faith journey.

"I was born in the American Episcopal Church within the Anglican Communion and was confirmed in the church at the age of 13. I have been extremely close to God since childhood. I can't recall a time when I didn't 'talk' to God, and my faith, and relationship with God have been the foundation of everything I do. I have always felt a calling from God to help the horses and have made many major decisions in my life based solely on faith, and God has always, without fail, sustained and carried me through every challenge."

What role does your faith play in your work with horses?

"Many people have deemed me 'crazy' for making many of the decisions I've made based solely on faith, especially in helping horses and making the sacrifices I have. I believe that if we are faithful and we honour and follow God's plan for us then He will see us through and cloak us with a shield of protection to fulfil that plan. And I have seen Him do it first hand in my life. Not long after my personal life collapsed, I was admitted to Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, and attended for one year but ultimately decided that God's calling was not to be a seminarian, but to fulfill His will in protecting horses, and that has become my ministry. I have been held at gunpoint twice, and have had far too many situations I've faced that should have led to my death, but without question I believe God protected me."



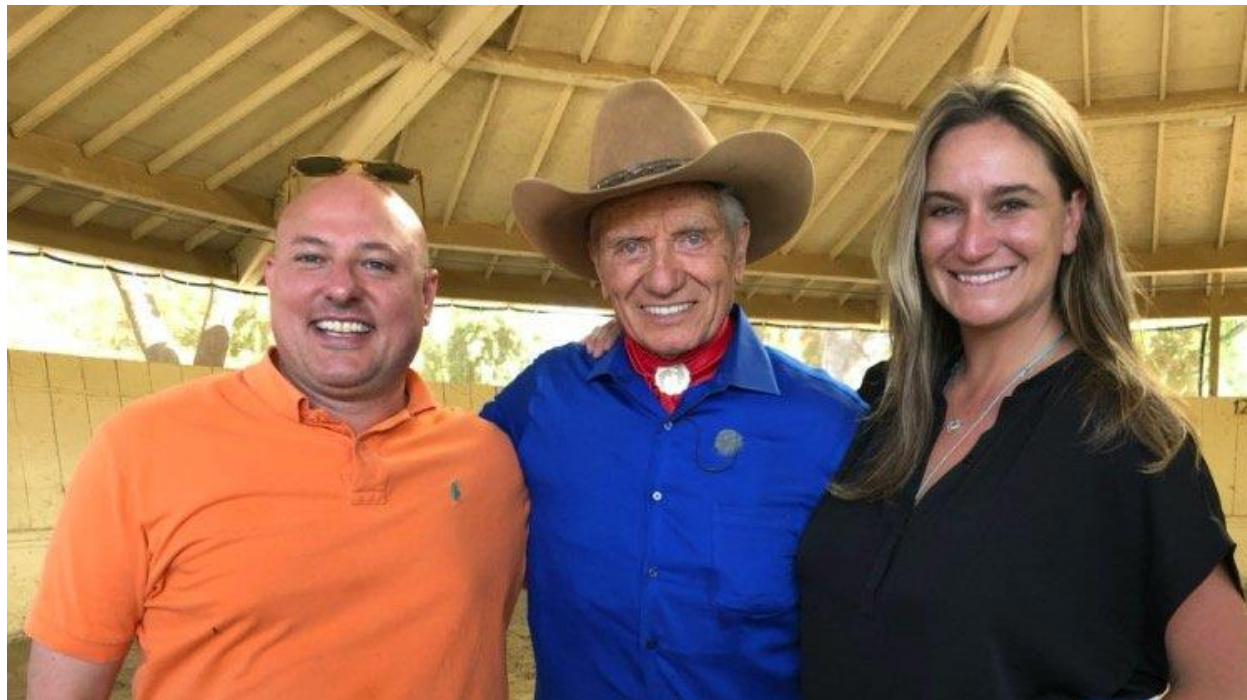
The certificate given to Marty Irby for his work with horses. PICTURE: Courtesy: Animal Wellness Action.

You were honoured in 2020 with a certificate recognition by Queen Elizabeth II for your work with horses - what did the honour mean to you?

"Her Majesty's recognition has truly been the greatest honour of my life, and kindest gesture any human being has ever shown me. For that to come from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who I

consider to be the greatest human being that has lived on this planet over the past century, and for her to recognise me - a nobody who grew up on a farm in Alabama in the US - well, I know that was God's doing, and there is no other explanation. The story is far too long to tell here, but I wrote it at the request of Monty Roberts, the Queen's trusted confidant, and Her Majesty read every word of it. That alone, that she read it, and knew my life story validated everything I have done in way that nothing else could. I believe my task to be ordained by God, quite frankly.

"I may not be a knight, but the Queen sure made me feel like one, and I believe she knew my heart. What Queen Elizabeth did for me inspired me to continue my work for as long as I shall live. I believe she planned it that way, and that there was absolute divine intervention amidst her decision."



*Marty Irby with Monty Roberts and Ashley Avis, director of Disney's 'Black Beauty' film.
PICTURE: Courtesy of Marty Irby*

You have had a connection with the Queen and her love of horses through your friend Monty Roberts. Tell us a bit about that.

"In 2005, Monty Roberts and his daughter Debbie Loucks came to visit with me and my mentor, William B Johnson, the founder of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, in Shelbyville, Tennessee. They had just left the Queen and brought the principles and concepts Monty teaches [[through his organisation Join-Up International](#)] to teach us as Her Majesty had charged Monty to spread these principles around the world. I was 26 and even though I had been a horseman my entire life, I had never seen anything like it. What I saw convinced me that I could help make what many would deem radical, long-lasting change and help to the Tennessee Walking Horses I care so deeply about and it set me on fire. Monty's demonstrations turned the key to the lock that had imprisoned my mind for my entire life, and it has never been the same since. Seventeen years later, we are doing more than ever to help the horses. The Tennessee Walking Horse has been the

most abused horse in America, and I am convinced that we will see that abuse brought to an end because of Queen Elizabeth II and Monty Roberts."

How did her recent passing impact you and how are you marking it?

"I bet I've burst into tears or welled up against them at least three dozen times since Her Majesty's passing just thinking about it and at least that many more reading so many great stories about her. I do wish I could be in London to pay my respects but since I am unable, I visited the kind people and embassy that represents the Crown in Washington, DC, where I live, and signed the book of condolences on Monday morning following Her Majesty's death...It was as honor and a privilege to have that opportunity in person, and I hope to join Her Majesty's service at the National Cathedral here in the US as well. On impact, I am more inspired than I have ever been to execute Her Majesty's charge and fulfill my life's purpose in helping horses and humans around the world and will do everything in my power to see her vision of a cruel free world for horses embraced by every breed, discipline, and horseperson on this planet."



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[Marty Irby: Meet Alabama native who is honoring Queen Elizabeth in way she would absolutely love](#)

'A devotion to horses is a passion the Queen and I share,' says Marty Irby

By Jenny Anna Mathew

Published on : 02:33 PST, Sep 19, 2022



*Marty Irby pledges to fight violence against horses
(Screenshot/CBS42 video, Michael Ukas/Getty Images)*

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA: An Alabama resident has come forward to share his remarkable journey of fighting against horse cruelty and reveals his greatest honor as the late Queen Elizabeth II awarded him for advocating against horse cruelty. Marty Irby has now vowed to honor the Queen's memory by continuing to work to protect the horses and stop the practices of abusive training methods used on horses.

Marty Irby, who grew up in the walking horse industry, stated that he started advocating against horse cruelty very early on in his life, specifically against soring, a practice where he says "horses' feet are coated in harmful chemicals like diesel fuel. Sharp objects are then placed into their hooves exacerbating pain." Irby who connected with the Queen's horsemen to learn more about horses says, "a devotion to horses is a passion the Queen and he shares," Irby told CBS42.



President Trump signs the first national anti-cruelty law with Marty Irby (Screenshot/CBS42 video)

"Queen Elizabeth was a long-time caregiver for horses, even saying as a child, she wanted to be one when she grew up," Irby told the outlet. Irby connected with the Queen's horse trainer Monty Roberts and adapted his natural horsemanship training principles now called 'Join Up.' Join up is an international foundation that practices the safe training of horses. Soon after, Irby took his advocacy to Washington DC. Irby said he came to Washington in 2013 to testify in front of congress about the horse cruelty issue and he never left. "I am still here," Irby remarked. He is currently an executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington DC and says, "Best decision I ever made though was to speak about it." He further added the Queen's horse trainer Monty Roberts notified the queen of his work. Irby then shared his story with the Queen through a letter he sent her and in 2020, a royal mail from Windsor Castle came for him.



Queen Elizabeth II sent a letter to Marty Irby for his efforts to fight against Horse cruelty (Screenshot/CBS42 video)

Irby was appalled by the Queen's gesture and said, "I thought, 'Oh my word. What is this?' I never imagined inside it would be an award from the queen for my extraordinary efforts to help in this cruelty around the world." Unfortunately, Irby and the Queen could not meet in person for the ceremony due to Covid but ever since Irby vows to continue spreading the natural horseman principles taught to him by Robert and will fight worldwide to end violence against horses. "You know, it worked out like it did, but I will cherish her memory for the rest of my life, and I don't know that I'll ever have a greater honor in my life that'll mean more than this coming from anyone on this planet today," Irby now continues to work to bring forth the queen's legacy of horse advocacy as he is currently working to pass the Safe Act to end horse slaughter in America and the Prevent practices of All Soring Tactics Act.



Marty Irby (L) connected with Queen's horse trainer Monty Roberts (R) to adapt his horsemanship skills (Screenshot/CBS42 video)



[Man honored by Queen Elizabeth II for work to improve horse industry](#)

By [Chelsea Jones](#)

Published: Sep. 19, 2022 at 4:30 PM EDT | Updated: 9 hours ago

LEXINGTON, Ky. (WKYT) - As the world reflects on the life of Queen Elizabeth II, one Kentuckian is remembering the common cause they shared.

[Click here for the video.](#)



When the queen's coffin left Westminster Abbey, tears rolled down Marty Irby's face. "I have just been mourning her loss over the past 10 days," Irby said.

Irby, who's spent much of his life fighting for horse rights, used to work for retired Kentucky Congressman Ed Whitfield.

He's also good friends with Monty Roberts, who trained the queen's horses for the past 35 years.



Marty Irby signs the book of condolences for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Washington, D.C. | Photo: Marty Irby

An eight-time world champion equestrian, Irby learned about the practice of soring. That's when trainers inflict pain on horses' legs and hooves to make them step higher and run faster. Although it's illegal in the U.S., Irby said it's still widely used in horse shows in Kentucky and Tennessee.

"The horse that steps the highest at the end of the day is who wins the prize," Irby said. Rep. Whitfield asked Irby to testify to Congress about inhumane horse training. After his testimony, Irby's life fell apart, receiving death threats from those in the horse industry.

"Mostly people in Tennessee and Kentucky are where the violent threats came from," Irby said. His friend Monty asked him to write his story and sent it to the queen in 2020. A few months later, Irby received an award from the queen honoring his work to end horse violence, with her signature in the bottom right corner.

"It's been the greatest honor of my life over the past two years," Irby said.

The queen was known for her love of horses, and that passion brought her to the bluegrass state three times. Twice in the 1980s and then for the 2007 Kentucky Derby. Each time she stayed at Bill Farish's Lane's End Farm in Woodford County.

In honor of her majesty, Irby plans to keep fighting for horses, now pushing for the passage of a horse racing safety bill and a bill that would end horse slaughter.

"It's going to be a big week for the horses, and I have to think that there's someone up in heaven is helping us this week," Irby said.

Thousands of people lined the streets on Monday to say a final goodbye to their late monarch.



[Mobile man honored by the late Queen Elizabeth in fight against animal cruelty](#)

“I couldn’t imagine a little guy from Mobile, Alabama would be working on something and getting an award from the Queen.”

By [Ashlyn Nichols](#)

Published: Sep. 18, 2022 at 10:30 PM EDT | Updated: 38 minutes ago

[Click here to play the full 2 minute piece.](#)



MOBILE, Ala. ([WALA](#)) - It’s a big deal to be honored by a queen... let alone the late monarch, Queen Elizabeth II. A Mobile native is one of just a few in the world who can boast this honor.

Marty Irby was born and raised in Mobile. He grew up in Semmes, Ala. and attended UMS-Wright Preparatory school before graduating from the University of South Alabama.

From a young age, Marty Irby says he never knew life without horses. He spent most of his time in the saddle and can't pinpoint the time he began riding... or, as he put it, "it was as natural as walking."

"My love for horses is inherent and it comes from my family-- my great-grandfather who was Sheriff Ray Bridges of Mobile and my grandfather, Dr. L. E. Irby and most of the people in Mobile have heard of them," said Marty Irby, Executive Director of Animal Wellness Action in Washington, D.C.

After graduating from USA, Irby moved to a farm to work with horses in Nashville, Tenn. During his time there, someone gave him the book, 'The Man who Listens to Horses', by Monty Roberts. Roberts is a world-renowned horseman and trainer for the late Queen Elizabeth's horses. Queen Elizabeth was infamous for her love of horses and Roberts worked with her throughout her life.

Roberts's book caught Irby's attention, particularly for the way he trained horses in a cruelty-free manner.

Irby told his boss in Nashville about Roberts's training methods. His boss set out to find him.

"He said 'we're going to track him down and if he's good enough for Queen Elizabeth, he's good enough for me'. And so he somehow tracked him down... he was actually with the Queen in England when he tracked him down and he said 'we want you to come to Tennessee to help us with these Tennessee walking horses.'"

For Irby, it was an urgent matter.

"Tennessee walking horses and Alabama racking horses are terribly, terribly abused. They intentionally inflict pain to these horses feet by means of "soring"- or intentionally creating pain," Irby explained.

Many trainers use "soring" to force horses to walk in an unnatural pattern.

"Tennessee walking horses and Alabama racking horses-- Alabama has a state horse, called the 'racking horse'-- are terribly, terribly abused. They intentionally inflict pain to these horses feet by means of "soring" or intentionally creating the pain through applying caustic chemicals such as mustard oil, diesel fuel, kerosene, or inserting sharp objects into the horses' feet to make them lift higher and perform this unnatural, artificial gait called the "Big Lift."

"I've been wanting to stop this for most of my life at least since I was 13 or 14 years old so Monty Roberts came to Tennessee and he met with us and I saw his training first hand and I was astounded and I knew- that was the first moment I knew I could stop this and change this all around the world."

Irby began advocating for animal rights in D.C. and was present in the Oval Office when former President Trump signed the 'Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act' in 2019. In fact, Irby was even given the chance to say a few words on national television and can be seen shaking Trump's hand.

"I came to DC to testify before Congress and I tell everybody I came with nothing but my suitcase--- and I never left."

Irby's legislative work drew a lot of attention-- and not all of it was positive. He faced many obstacles including death threats for his work against soring. Still, Irby said that did not stop him.

Eventually, Roberts approached Irby and asked him to write his life story. After writing a ten-page narrative on his journey in advocating for animal rights, Roberts presented the story to the Queen.

Her Majesty read the entire story.

"Just the fact that Queen Elizabeth read my life story and knew what had happened to me and what I had been through really validated all of the work that I've done," stated Irby.

"A few months later it was a rainy, August evening. I got a knock at my door and there was a package left at my doorstep and there was this envelope that said "Royal Mail" from Windsor Castle," he added.

Now an animal rights activist in Washington D.C. and founder/ executive director of Animal Wellness Action, Irby has not forgotten his Mobile roots.

"I would say it's important for people to realize that international recognition for somebody from Mobile really helps put Mobile on the map."

With Queen Elizabeth II's funeral approaching, Irby says he will be watching and grieving with the rest of the world. Meanwhile, his buddy Roberts is one of the two thousand people invited to the funeral.

Irby says he hopes his story will inspire people at home in Mobile. He says he could have never anticipated these larger-than-life experiences and the chance to fight for something he believes in.

Irby is an eight-time world champion equestrian rider. He has helped enact six acts against animal cruelty in Congress.

"I just advise anybody to work as hard as they can and follow their dreams and really work to accomplish those goals because anybody can do it."

“I couldn’t imagine a little guy from Mobile, Alabama would be working on something and getting an award from the Queen.”

Irby says he plans to continue the work of animal rights and will do this as a way to honor the late Queen. One day, he hopes to return to the area and live among the community he loves.

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[Alabama native works to honor Queen Elizabeth through horse advocacy](#)

by: Allie Root



Marty Irby works to carry on Queen Elizabeth's Legacy of horse advocacy

BIRMINGHAM, Ala ([WIAT](#))— Ahead of Queen Elizabeth's funeral tomorrow, an Alabama native shares how the queen once awarded him for his advocacy against horse cruelty. He now vows to honor her death by continuing his work to stamp out abusive training methods on horses.

Lifelong horseman, Marty Irby, tells CBS42 that Queen Elizabeth was a long-time caregiver for horses, even saying as a child, she wanted to be one when she grew up. He says this devotion to horses is a passion they share.

Growing up in the walking horse industry, Irby developed an early passion for reducing horse cruelty- specifically soring where he says horses' feet are coated in harmful chemicals like diesel fuel. Sharp objects are then placed into their hooves exacerbating pain.

Irby later connected with the queen's horse trainer, Monty Roberts, and adopted his natural horsemanship training principles now called 'Join Up.' Soon after, Irby took his advocacy to Washington D.C.

"Best decision I ever made though was to speak about it," Irby said. "I ended up coming to Washington D.C. in 2013 to testify in front of congress about the issue and I never left. I'm still here today."

He says Roberts notified the queen of his work. Irby then shared his story with her through a letter. In 2020, royal mail from Windsor Castle came knocking.

“And I thought, ‘Oh my word. What is this?’ I never imagined inside it would be an award from the queen for my extraordinary efforts to help in this cruelty around the world,” Irby said.

He and the queen never met for an in-person ceremony due to COVID, but moving forward, Irby says he will continue spreading Robert’s natural principles worldwide while fighting to end horse cruelty for good.

“You know, it worked out like it did, but I will cherish her memory for the rest of my life, and I don’t know that I’ll ever have a greater honor in my life that’ll mean more than this coming from anyone on this planet today,” Irby said.

Irby is currently an executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington D.C. To continue the queen’s legacy of horse advocacy, Irby says they are currently working to pass the Safe Act to end horse slaughter in America and the Prevent All Soring Tactics Act.



Mobile Native Shares Connection with Queen on Humane Horse Treatment

by: Chad Petri



[Click here to watch the full interview.](#)

MOBILE, Ala. ([WKRG](#)) — It's not every day you get something in the mail from the Queen of England herself. Two years ago Mobile native and director of Animal Wellness Action received this recognition for his work promoting human training of horses over methods that cause pain or what's known as soring.

“To grant an award to a little guy from Mobile Alabama really validated so much of the work and sacrifices made to accomplish these goals for the horses,” said Mobile Native Marty Irby via a Zoom interview Sunday morning.

He's the Executive Director of Animal Wellness Action. His connection to Queen Elizabeth II–[American Cowboy Monty Roberts who was the Queen's friend and horse trainer](#)–Roberts asked Irby to write to the Queen about [his efforts to end hurtful horse training](#).

“We all want to make sure horses are treated humanely and there are so many people that have issues and they don't know necessarily they're doing something wrong or abusing the horse they just need to be shown the right way and the path forward,” said Irby.

Irby [describes his work as something that also took a toll on his life, losing friendships while bucking a trend in horse culture](#).

“Just that knowledge that the Queen knew my life's story and what I'd been through validated so many things in my work,” said Irby. “I think she saw horses as icons the civilization we live in today was built on their backs she had a special love and bond with horses.”



HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
as Patron of Join-Up International
has been graciously pleased to recognise

Marty Irby

representing

United States of America

for his extraordinary efforts to reduce
violence in the training of horses by adopting
Monty Roberts' concepts and initiatives

on this day,

Monday, 3rd August, 2020

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[WKRN: 'The greatest honor of my life'](#)

Thursday, September 8, 2022

[Click here to watch the interview with Animal Wellness Action](#)



'The greatest honor of my life'

27 views • Sep 8, 2022

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TENNESSEE | LOOKOUT

[Will U.S. Supreme Court decide the fate of the Tennessee Walking Horse?](#)

[BY MARTY IRBY](#)

SEPTEMBER 3, 2022 7:00 AM



2014 Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration. (Photo: Margret Wood/Flickr)

As the curtains close on the 84th Annual Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration in Shelbyville, I am reminded of the World Grand Champion crowned in 1992: [Dark Spirit's Rebel](#), who claimed victory with the late [Bud Dunn](#), his first World Grand Championship at the age of 74, and who wore the rider number 1865 to win the roses.

That night, Celebration announcer Bobby Sands pointed out there was in fact “some irony there,” regarding the number – symbolic of the year 1865, when the Confederacy surrendered and ended the Civil War. The connotation was at the time very fitting, especially with the fans of Bud and Rebel who waved Confederate flags all around the 30,000-seat filled stadium that night. One fan was so enthralled he dressed in full Confederate uniform with a 20-foot-tall giant rebel flag of his own.

Only 13 years old, I was there that night, watching the crowd while my father judged the event. The roaring fans that screamed for Bud and Rebel were something I'd never seen at that level before. Quite frankly, the judges feared they'd be mobbed if Bud and Rebel didn't win. But they did, and the cultish world of "Big Lick" Tennessee Walking Horses and the animal cruelty associated with it, continued on.

The "Big Lick" is an artificial pain-based exaggerated version of the Tennessee Walking Horses' natural gait, bastardized by the practice of soring — the intentional infliction of pain by applying caustic chemicals such as kerosene, mustard oil, croton oil, and abrasive hand cleaners to the skin or by inserting sharp objects into the hooves. Once sored, the pain is exacerbated by the use of ankle chains placed around the burned skin, and large stacked shoes strapped to the hooves.

Soring has persisted since the late 1950s, despite the enactment of the Horse Protection Act (HPA) in 1970 designed to stamp out the practice. It has persisted because of the political power held by a few members of Congress from Tennessee and Kentucky, and an irresolute U.S. Department of Agriculture that has regulated soring for the past 52 years rather than stamping out the practice.

What's most interesting is that the USDA, now led by Secretary Tom Vilsack, has allowed the use of those ankle chains and large-stacked shoes in the showring just as they were in 1992, the very same torture devices we've seen since they were last downsized in 1988. While the Celebration belatedly but rightly [condemned the Confederacy and Confederate battle flag in recent years](#), it is still lagging on the moral problem of soring. The torture devices affixed onto the forelimbs of Bud and Rebel in 1992 are still a feature of the Celebration 30 years later. In fact, ankle chains and stacked shoes will be fastened to the feet of the World Grand Champion crowned tonight, with Gov. Bill Lee standing at the winners' side presenting the trophy.

The torment persists despite an overwhelming vote in the U.S. House of 333 to 96 in 2019 to ban those devices. The Senate failed to act. And so has the USDA, which as long ago as 1979 warned about the use of ankle chains and large-stacked shoes.

And there's still no pathway in the Senate for the PAST Act as introduced despite both Chambers of Congress and the White House being controlled by Democrats, who've been the primary champions of the legislation.

The federal courts have not generally been a productive pathway for the critics of soring, as the industry has parried attempts to attack the problem of soring through that channel. One court [ruled against the USDA's imposition of mandatory penalties](#) for those caught soring. Another [court ruled in support of the Big Lick World Grand Champion "Honors"](#) being allowed to show and compete even after the horse had been deemed scarred from soring abuse. Even [Judge Oliver Gasch's attempt to end the Big Lick failed in 1988](#).

But there's been a new development, that quite frankly, most everyone was surprised to see. The Federal Court of Appeals [recently ruled](#) that the USDA's withdrawal of a regulation that would have banned soring devices in 2017 was improper, and in violation of the federal Administrative

Procedures Act. That has the potential to end the use of ankle chains and large stacked shoes once and for all.

There's still an opportunity for further appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States, the highest court in the land, which seems very likely to occur. [My late friend, Bill Harlin](#), the proprietor of Harlinsdale Farm in Franklin, predicted such a scenario long ago. He was present for the founding of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' and Exhibitors' Association, the breed registry established in 1935 in the Lewisburg Courthouse, and he frequently said to me "It all started in a courthouse, and it'll end in a courthouse as well."

Regardless of who is crowned World Grand Champion tonight, the PAST Act, and every other approach to stamp out soring, I am looking forward to the Tennessee Walking Horses having their day in court, and I hope Bill Harlin was right – that we see the end of this half a century long debate on soring brought to a close with SCOTUS ruling on the matter.



[MARTY IRBY](#)

Marty Irby is the executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington, D.C., and an eight-time World Champion equestrian who was named as one of The Hill's Top Lobbyists for 2019, 2020, and 2021, and was recently honored by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, II for his work to protect horses. Follow him on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook @MartyIrby.

[MORE FROM AUTHOR](#)



July 21, 2022

OPINION

[Congress should pass bipartisan compromise to protect horses and stop soring](#) | Opinion

A vote to ban soring that passes through both chambers and is inked into law by the President is the only way to bring relief to the horses.

Marty Irby

Guest Columnist

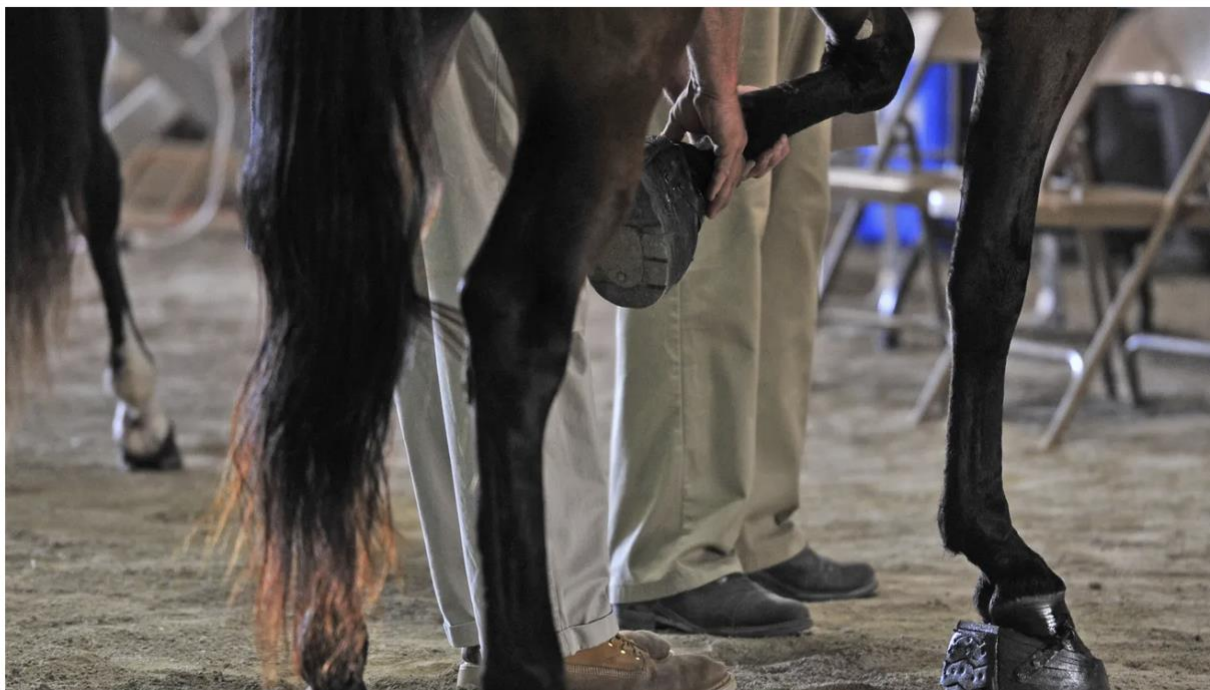
Marty Irby is the executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington, D.C., and past president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association.

In June, a key U.S. House Committee examined and advanced the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 5441, a measure first introduced a decade ago that would stamp out the terrible practice of soring that has plagued the Tennessee Walking Horse breed and the Volunteer State for more than 60 years.

Soring is the intentional infliction of pain to the front feet and limbs of Tennessee Walking Horses' by applying caustic chemicals such as kerosene or mustard oil to the skin, or inserting sharp objects into the horses' hooves to create an artificial, pain-based gait known as the Big Lick. Once prized all over the country, it is seen now primarily only in Bedford, Rutherford and Maury Counties, a few areas in North Alabama and some rural parts of Kentucky and North Carolina.



Former U.S. senator (Md.) and author of the Horse Protection Act Josephs Tydings, vice president of inspections for the International Walking Horse Association and Mississippi-based attorney Clant Seay meet with the editorial board.



An inspector checks a horse for signs of soring during a Tennessee Walking Horse show in Shelbyville, Tenn. *File / The Tennessean*

The PAST Act would amend the Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970 by banning the use of large-stacked shoes and ankle chains used in the show ring to exacerbate the pain induced—providing felony level penalties for those convicted of violating the HPA and

replacing the current industry self-policing scheme with federally licensed inspectors from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Our fight for horse's rights

In 2019, we worked to successfully pass the PAST Act through the U.S. House by a vote of 333 to 96 with support from Tennessee lawmakers including Reps. Jim Cooper, D-Nashville, Tim Burchett, R-Knoxville and Steve Cohen, D-Memphis—the current lead sponsor of the bill.



Marty Irby Submitted

The bill passed because we developed a new strategy in concert with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others to rename PAST in honor of the HPA's author, my late friend, U.S. Sen. Joseph D. Tydings, D-Maryland. We attracted 308 House cosponsors and triggered a new rule that finally brought the measure to a vote in the chamber closest to the American people.

However, the U.S. Senate is a different beast. A handful of lawmakers can block a vote— which is exactly what happened. It's a political science lesson that a sectional alliance in the Senate can stymie a measure that would easily attract 80 "Yes" votes in the 100-member Upper Chamber.

While we continue to support the old PAST Act, the last decade has proven obstructionism continues to prevail in the Senate. That's why we worked with leaders in the walking horse breed in 2020 to hear out on their concerns about why they thought the bill went too far.



GALLERY: 31st Annual Mid-South Charity Walking Horse Show

Compromise was key to our success

In the end, we settled on a compromise to eliminate ankle chains and provide felony penalties, as the PAST Act does — but allow a smaller, removable shoe used by other breeds.

The USDA and federal law enforcement agencies could bring felony charges against perpetrators under the compromise, but there would be a supplementary independent non-governmental body free from conflicts that could swiftly issue fines and suspensions. We've all watched the USDA fail to end soring for six decades, and even allow trainers to punt and take their suspensions after they've retired well past the age of 70.

The revisions went further than the PAST Act to end the use of treacherous devices known as tail braces, which hold the horse's tail in an inverted U-shaped position after the ligaments in the tail have been severed—all for a certain look.

Some animal groups don't understand the principle of political compromise, and they've been blocking this ban on soring that would have taken effect in November of last year.

It's time for them to get on board or get out of the way. A vote in the House is no win for horses, especially if it falls short of 2019's vote record. A vote to ban soring that passes legislation through both chambers and is inked into law by the President is the only pathway to bring relief to the horses.

Leaders in the walking horse breed and members of the Tennessee Republican Delegation have since worked with us to secure record-breaking funding for enforcement of the Horse Protection Act — more than \$3 million for 2022 alone, a stark contrast to the \$705,000 we saw in 2019 and the \$1 million we saw in 2020.

Rather than banking on the uncertainty of very limited regulatory improvements that can be quickly unwound by any future Secretary of Agriculture, Congress can and should act to deliver comprehensive reform and end the scourge of soring.

Marty Irby is the executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington, D.C., and past president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association. He was named of The Hill's Top Lobbyists for 2019-21. Follow him on Instagram @MartyIrby.



[U.S. House Committee Advances Permanent Ban on Horse Slaughter and Legislation to End Soring of Tennessee Walking Horses](#)

32 mins ago



Move Follows Animal Wellness Action's Submission of More than 330 Pages of Written Testimony and Collateral Material on PAST and SAFE Acts Last Month

Today, Animal Wellness Action and its affiliates applauded the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce's Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce, led by Chairwoman Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., and Ranking Member Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla., for advancing two key pieces of equine protection legislation in a markup, the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 5441, and the Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act, H.R. 3355. The action today puts them in motion and creates an opportunity for additional legislating in the House and Senate.

The anti-soring legislation has been in similar form for a decade, and the anti-horse-slaughter legislation has been around for nearly a quarter century. PAST would amend the Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970 make it a federal felony to inflict pain on Tennessee Walking Horses' front limbs to achieve the artificial high step known as the "Big Lick" that's prized in some parts of the South, mainly Tennessee and Kentucky. SAFE would bring an end to the gruesome trade in horse meat and the slaughter of American equines shipped to Mexico and Canada – a trade that not long ago claimed the lives of 140,000 horses a year but has been reduced to some 23,000 of them in 2021. The current leaders of Animal Wellness Action were among the architects of original anti-soring and anti-slaughter bills, working also with an earlier generation of lawmakers to put these issues on the national animal welfare agenda. Animal Wellness Action submitted 332 pages of testimony and collateral material to the Committee in May.

"We applaud Chairwoman Jan Schakowsky and Ranking Member Gus Bilirakis for moving these key horse protection measures forward in the 117th Congress," said Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action and a past president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association. "It's long past time to end the scourge of soring I've witnessed since childhood. There's a long way to go still, though, and the key is finding a bill that can get through the Senate."

"The horse slaughter industry incentivizes horse theft, predatory behavior, and fraud," said Chairwoman Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., during the markup today in pushing for the successful passage of the anti-slaughter bill. Schakowsky then pushed the anti-soring legislation and called on "colleagues to join in ending horse soring and supporting this legislation." The committee then unanimously passed the SAFE Act by a voice vote and the PAST Act unanimously by a recorded vote of 22 to 0.

"Horses are revered by most Americans as iconic partners in work, sport, and recreation, yet for too long they have been victimized by nefarious interests who gain from their needless suffering," said Scott Beckstead, director of campaigns for the Center for a Humane Economy. "It's gratifying to see Congress moving forward with these essential pieces of legislation to finally protect all American equines, both wild and domesticated, from cruelty, exploitation, and abuse."

"I believe that animals should be treated in a compassionate and humane manner," said Ranking Member Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla., speaking in support of the SAFE Act during the markup today. "There is a no excuse for allowing any animal to needlessly suffer in any inappropriate or inhumane way."

Background

The PAST Act, H.R. 5441/S. 2295, introduced in the 117th Congress by U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo, R-Ida., and Mark Warner, D-Va., and Reps. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., Schakowsky, and Kurt Schrader, DVM, D-Ore., the only veterinarian in Congress, passed the House by a vote of 333 to 96 in 2019. It was renamed in 2019 the U.S. Senator Joseph D. Tydings Memorial PAST Act at the request of the Tydings family to honor the late senator, who passed away in late 2018. The bill did not see any action in the Senate because of steadfast opposition from the Senate delegations from Kentucky and Tennessee.

PAST would eliminate the use of large, stacked shoes and ankle chains that are placed on horses' feet to exacerbate pain in the showring and produce the Big Lick; revamp the USDA's inspection program; and provide felony level penalties to give teeth to the HPA.

Following PAST's passage in the House in 2019, and knowing of continued intransigence in the Senate among key actors there, Animal Wellness Action leaders worked with the industry for 19 months on revisions to the bill that would bring support from the top organizations in the Tennessee Walking Horse breed and from senators from Tennessee and Kentucky, who have long opposed the measure.

Former Rep. Ed Whitfield, R-Ky., the original author and sponsor of the PAST Act who first introduced the bill in 2012, submitted a letter noting that compromise is almost certainly going to be required to pass the measure in the Senate. [Click here to see Whitfield's letter to the Committee.](#)

Animal Wellness Action also worked with leaders in the breed to secure more than \$3 million in record-breaking funding for enforcement of the Horse Protection Act in 2022, and nearly \$4.1 million in record-breaking funding just released in the House's FY23-related spending bill. The opportunity to make revisions to PAST still remains with Tennessee Walking Horse leaders, who have conceded soring must end.

The SAFE Act, H.R. 3355/S. 2732, introduced in the 117th Congress by U.S. Sens. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Reps. Schakowsky and Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., would permanently ban the transport of horses bound for slaughter. A similar bill to ban horse slaughter saw a hearing in the previous Congress in the Health Subcommittee, but no further action occurred beyond that in either chamber. Irby also testified in support of the SAFE Act and legislation to end doping in American horse racing in a January 2020 hearing before Schakowsky's Subcommittee as well.

In 2021, Animal Wellness Action conceived and shepherded to passage an alternative anti-slaughter measure led by Reps. Troy Carter, D-La., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., John Katko, R-N.Y., Schakowsky, Cohen, and Rep. Dina Titus, D-N.V. The Members who introduced the legislation were joined by cosponsors that included co-chairs of the Congressional Horse Protection Caucus Andy Barr, R-Ky., and Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., and co-chairs of the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus Vern Buchanan, and Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore. It would

have simply banned the transport of equines across state and federal lines for the purposes of slaughter and passed the House in June of last year by a voice vote with little to no opposition. That measure was endorsed by more than 225 equine-related businesses, groups, and organizations, as well as a wide array of stake holders that included The Jockey Club; The Breeders' Cup; Water, Hay Oats Alliance; New York Racing Association and others. Unfortunately, just like PAST, the measure died in the U.S. Senate, where it continues to be an uphill battle to pass horse protection legislation in the 117th Congress.

FAIRMONTPOST

Thursday, June 23, 2022

[U.S. House Energy & Commerce Committee Announces Markup on PAST and SAFE Acts Designed to Protect American Equines](#)

BY MARC BROUSSEAU, June 23, 2022 in Animals



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The U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce has [announced](#) a Subcommittee markup on the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act, H.R. 5441, and the Save America's Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act, H.R. 3355, to be held on Thursday, June 23, 2022 at 10:30 AM EST. The Committee action follows a hearing on both bills in May.

The substance of both measures has been introduced in each Congress since 2012. PAST would amend the Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970 help end soring – the intentional infliction of pain to Tennessee Walking Horses' front limbs in order to achieve the artificial high step known as the "Big Lick" that's prized in small rural parts of Tennessee and Kentucky. SAFE would

bring an end to the gruesome trade in horse meat and the slaughter of American equines shipped to Mexico and Canada – some 23,000 of them in 2021. Animal Wellness Action (AWA) leaders have long pressed for passage of both bills.

Animal Wellness Action executive director Marty Irby, who testified in person before the Committee in 2013 on the issue of soring, submitted written testimony on the PAST Act last month, including [332 pages of collateral material](#) that provided a history of work on PAST and the issue of soring over the past decade. Irby, along with AWA and the Center for a Humane Economy’s director of campaigns, Scott Beckstead, also submitted written testimony and materials supporting the SAFE Act as well.

“We applaud Chairwoman Jan Schakowsky and Ranking Member Gus Bilirakis for moving these key horse protection measures forward in the 117th Congress,” **said Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action in Washington, D.C., and a past president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders’ & Exhibitors’ Association who was named one of The Hill’s Top Lobbyists for 2019, 2020, and 2021.** “While the effort to end horse slaughter has built tremendous steam over the past year, the PAST Act, as written, remains dead on arrival in the U.S. Senate due to opposition from every major Tennessee Walking Horse group in the U.S., and the Senators from Tennessee and Kentucky. We hope House leaders will consider amending PAST in order to give the measure a fighting chance in the Upper Chamber.”

“This legislation will protect horses from being slaughtered for human consumption. Horse slaughter is not only inherently cruel but is also very dangerous. Horse meat can be toxic,” **said Chairwoman Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., during a May 2022 hearing.** “And we also have the opportunity to end the abusive practice of horse soring. This horrifying act involves the intentional injury of horses hooves and legs of performing walking horses.”

“Allowing our horses to be shipped across the border to be slaughtered for the sake of foreign meat companies is an un-American betrayal of a good and trusted friend,” **said Scott Beckstead, director of campaigns for the Center for a Humane Economy.** “It’s time to align our deep love and respect for our equines with federal law by passing the SAFE Act.”

“My grandfather spoke often about compromise,” **said Ben Tydings Smith, grandson of the late U.S. Senator Joseph D. Tydings, author of the HPA designed to stamp out soring.** “He spoke often about compromise related to the HPA and how he reached across the aisle to the late U.S. Senator Howard Baker, R-Tenn., to pass the measure and secure the very first law to protect our iconic American equines — whose very backs this country was built upon. He knew the HPA wasn’t perfect. He knew the measure could have done more. But he also recognized that the perfect should never be the enemy of the good, and that supporting progress for horse protection was the right thing to do. The status quo was not acceptable to Joe Tydings.”

Background:

The PAST Act, H.R. 5441/S. 2295, introduced in the 117th Congress by U.S. Sens. Mike Crapo, R-Ida., and Mark Warner, D-Va., and Reps. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., Schakowsky, and Kurt Schrader, DVM, the only veterinarian in

Congress, passed the House by a vote of 333 to 96 in 2019. It was renamed in 2019 the U.S. Senator Joseph D. Tydings Memorial PAST Act at the request of the Tydings family to honor the late senator, who passed away in late 2018. The bill died on arrival in the Senate due to lack of support from key leaders in the Upper Chamber.

PAST would eliminate the use of large, stacked shoes, and ankle chains that are placed on horses' feet to exacerbate pain in the showring and produce the Big Lick; revamp the USDA's inspection program; and provide felony level penalties to give teeth to the HPA.

Following PAST's passage in the House in 2019, with the bill dead on arrival in the Senate, AWA leaders worked with the industry for 19 months on revisions to the bill that would bring support from the top organizations in the Tennessee Walking Horse breed and from senators from Tennessee and Kentucky, who have long opposed the measure. That effort was torpedoed by the Humane Society of the United States and the Humane Society Legislative Fund. AWA also worked with leaders in the breed to secure more than \$3 million in record breaking funding for enforcement of the Horse Protection Act in 2022, and nearly \$4.1 million in record breaking funding just released in the House's FY23-related spending bill. The opportunity to make revisions to PAST still remains with Tennessee Walking Horse leaders who have conceded soring must end.

The SAFE Act, H.R. 3355/S. 2732, introduced in the 117th Congress by U.S. Sens. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Reps. Schakowsky and Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., would permanently ban the transport of horses bound for slaughter. A similar bill to ban horse slaughter saw a hearing in the previous Congress in the Health Subcommittee, but no further action occurred beyond that in either chamber. Irby also testified in support of the SAFE Act and legislation to end doping in American horse racing in a January 2020 hearing before Schakowsky's Subcommittee as well.

In 2021, AWA conceived and shepherded to passage an alternative anti-slaughter measure led by Reps. Troy Carter, D-La., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., John Katko, R-N.Y., Schakowsky, Cohen, and Rep. Dina Titus, D-N.V. The Members who introduced the legislation were joined by cosponsors that included co-chairs of the Congressional Horse Protection Caucus Andy Barr, R-Ky., and Paul Tonko, D-N.Y., and co-chairs of the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus Vern Buchanan, and Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore. It would have simply banned the transport of equines across state and federal lines for the purposes of slaughter and passed the House in June of last year by a voice vote with little to no opposition.

That measure was endorsed by more than 225 equine related businesses, groups, organizations, and a wide array of stake holders that included The Jockey Club, The Breeders' Cup, Water, Hay Oats Alliance, New York Racing Association, and others. Unfortunately, just like PAST, the measure died in the U.S. Senate, where it continues to be an uphill battle to pass horse protection legislation in the 117th Congress.

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Horse Health Matters

[Animal Wellness Action's Lobbying for Increase in Horse Protection Act Funding Secures \\$4.1 Million in FY23 House Agriculture Appropriations Bill](#)



Horse performing with high stepping gait caused by soring. Randall Saxton

This week Animal Wellness Action (AWA), the Washington-based non-profit political advocacy group that worked diligently to pass the U.S. Senator Joseph D. Tydings Memorial Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act through the U.S. House in 2019, applauded U.S. House Appropriations Committee leaders for their inclusion of the highest-ever funding levels for enforcement of the Horse Protection Act (HPA) of 1970 in their Fiscal Year 2023 spending bill. The measure includes \$4,096,000 in HPA funding, nearly six times the amount appropriated from in 2018.

In addition to helping end soring, the legislation would also renew the ban on horse slaughter in U.S.



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Until 2019, federal funding for HPA enforcement had never exceeded \$705,000 for a single fiscal year. AWA, which was formed in 2018, has made HPA funding a top priority in the war to end ‘soring’ – the intentional infliction of pain to horses’ front limbs to induce an artificial high-step gait known as the ‘big lick’ that’s prized at Tennessee Walking Horse shows in the Southeastern U.S.

The larger equine community and animal protection world has long recognized that a lack of HPA funding for enforcement has contributed to the soring events that run rampant, especially in Tennessee and Kentucky. AWA also helped secure HPA funding in the amount of \$1,000,000 for FY2020, \$2,009,000 for FY2021, and \$3,040,000 for FY2022 in collaboration with leaders in the Tennessee Walking Horse industry and Members of the Tennessee and Kentucky Congressional Delegations, all of whom have conceded that soring must end.

“We applaud appropriators in Congress for responding to our pleas to end soring by providing record-breaking funding to wipe-out this painful scourge that’s marred the show horse world since the 1950’s,” said [Marty Irby](#), executive director at Animal Wellness Action, and a past president of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders’ & Exhibitors’ Association who was honored by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in 2020 for his work to end soring.

“While legislation that would also help stamp out soring continues to face tremendous opposition in the U.S. Senate, we remain steadfast in exploring new avenues and opportunities to work with leaders in the breed on provisions that we can all agree upon.”

Members of Congress who did the heavy lifting with AWA and Tennessee Walking Horse leaders to secure the new HPA funding include Reps. Sanford Bishop, D-Ga., Kurt Schrader, D-

Oregon, Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., Ron Estes, R-Kansas, Hal Rogers, R-Ky., Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., and John Rose, R-Tenn.

The *de facto* ban on horse slaughter in the U.S. first executed approximately 15 years ago has been achieved by defunding USDA inspection of horse slaughter plants on U.S. soil through language in the annual spending bill, and that provision was maintained in the House-released FY23 bill thanks to the work of Reps. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., and the leaders of the House Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee.

A lack of inspections means horse meat cannot be legally sold in interstate commerce, effectively making horse slaughter illegal. Sadly, thousands of American equines continue to be shipped to foreign slaughter plants, underscoring the need for a federal ban that will finally bring the predatory horse slaughter industry in the U.S. to a long-overdue end.

[Click here to view the full FY23 Agriculture Appropriations bill](#) released with HPA funding on page 15 and the horse slaughter defund language on page 110.