



September 18, 2023

The Honorable John Curtis  
2323 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Curtis:

I'm the founder of Liberty Sanctuary, an equine sanctuary in Heber City. We exclusively rescue equines from the slaughter pipeline. I have lived in Utah for 20 years and have always been inspired by horses. The American equine, especially the horse, is a living icon of the American spirit and freedom for so many of us. When I learned about the horrors our equines experience in the slaughter pipeline I knew I had to take action by bringing rescues to Utah to care for them and share their stories. Beginning in April of this year, we started our rescue operations making difficult choices from long distances. I funded our inaugural mission and began by rescuing 10 equines from a kill pen in Bowie, TX. We currently have 27 rescues in residence including 11 baby foals that were separated from their parents in the Wyoming Wind River Reservation roundup. Their parents were promptly sent to slaughter in Mexico.

Sadly, these aren't unique stories. Approximately, 20,000 American equines are exported for slaughter on an annual basis. That number has dropped dramatically over the years as the seedy underbelly of the slaughter pipeline is exposed over time. Additionally, American equines are treated with medications the FDA bans for human consumption presenting health safety concerns. When people learn about the realities, they are shocked and oppose this mistreatment and abuse. The fact is 92.3% of American horses in the slaughter pipeline are deemed healthy by the USDA. As the public uncovers these facts, 82% of Americans oppose the slaughter of equines according to recent polls. Equines are the third top companion animal after dogs and cats. They have been our unwavering partner in building this great nation and in sport and work. It is largely due to the dedication of the American

equine that pioneers were able to discover and develop our beautiful state of Utah. They have earned and deserve our respect and protection, just as other companion animals. Besides the bald eagle, there is no other animal that embodies our nation's ethos in a more meaningful way.

From a financial standpoint, equines are more lucrative alive than dead. The US economy benefits from a thriving equine industry as horses and their owners generate \$122 billion in revenues annually. The equine industry employs more than 1.7 million people nationally. Allowing the slaughter pipeline to exist only artificially raises the price of those equines sometimes funding illegal schemes and black-market businesses. Currently, rescues are forced to scramble to pay inflated bail prices. Passing the SAFE Act and closing the pipeline would allow the market to rebalance and rescues to more effectively use funds to care for animals and expand operations. Resources could more effectively be allocated without this artificial market.

I know that western elected officials don't always support equine related issues, but not all issues are the same. What occurs in the slaughter pipeline is unconscionable. Equines are raised as partners and companions. To trade that companion, enslave it and torture it is simply not in line with our American values. I am equine agnostic. I can see promise in the eyes of most horses and donkeys, especially the young ones we choose to rescue and rehabilitate. We are not activists. I'm a former businessperson with a corporate background. We seek solutions and want to help build a better alternative for our equine partners to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. We envision a national equine assistance network connecting the dots for horse owners in need with hay banks, responsible breeding measures, medical supervision, humane euthanasia when necessary and more. There are homes for the horses in the slaughter pipeline if we all work together on solutions. Slaughter is not euthanasia and it's not the answer. Ever.

I understand there are complicated issues that relate to usage of our public lands. That's a discussion better fielded by others in the wild horse world. I am exclusively motivated to help shut down the slaughter pipeline and pass the SAFE Act (Save America's Forgotten Equines, H.R. 3475), that would amend the 2018 Dog and Cat Meat Trade Prohibition Act to add "or equines," thus giving our three most cherished companion animal species protection against slaughter. It is domestic horses – not wild horses - that make up the greatest percentage of the slaughter population. We

would like to see the SAFE Act added to the 2023 Farm Bill as an amendment to finally afford our equine companions a basic measure of protection and decency.

Most complex issues are best understood on the ground so I would like to invite you to our ranch in Heber where you can meet the valuable equines we have rescued. You can see firsthand the progress we are making with them and the relationships they have made. These animals are not meat for consumers in China and Russia. They are a critical part of our American story. They are living, breathing icons of American freedom. They are souls with huge hearts and deserve to live in peace. We are charged with protecting the vulnerable. It's humane and the American way. Horse homelessness is a moral responsibility with solutions, not an economic opportunity for an underworld. There are ways to solve this problem and we look forward to discussing those ideas and creating solutions.

Please join us for lunch at Liberty Sanctuary and to meet the equine rescues on property. We appreciate any support in adding the SAFE Act to the Farm Bill so that we may give our beloved American equines the protection they so clearly deserve. If you are unable to stand for the SAFE Act, I implore you not to stand against it.

Thank you for considering my views and for your service to the people of Utah.

Sincerely,

Debra West, Founder  
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All Utah State Esteemed Senators and Representatives