



## Racehorse Health and Safety Act Reintroduced

*Horseracing coalition reintroduces bill to replace unconstitutional HISA*

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**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, on the heels of the 151<sup>st</sup> running of the Kentucky Derby, Rep. Clay Higgins (LA-03), Rep. Don Davis (NC-01), and Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) introduced the Racehorse Health and Safety Act (RHSA), a bipartisan, bicameral effort to deliver a constitutional solution to safety regulation in the horse racing industry. The legislation is backed by industry organizations representing tens of thousands of horsemen and is endorsed by the National Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association (HBPA), the United States Trotting Association (USTA), the North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians (NAARV), and others.

The RHSA would establish an interstate compact to develop nationwide rules governing scientific medication control and racetrack safety for horse racing. The RHSA would replace the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Act of 2020 (HISA), which has been found unconstitutional by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and awaits a decision on whether the Supreme Court will take up the case.

“Government should be a partner to Americans, not a predator. While the federal government initially passed HISA with the intention of bringing uniformity to the horse racing industry, it proved to be a well-intentioned disaster that plagued the industry with confusion and disruption. The Racehorse Health and Safety Act is a solution to the problem. It is rooted in science and draws from industry experts. It is of horsemen, by horsemen, and for horsemen. This legislation protects horses and horsemen while reasserting state sovereignty and pushing back against federal oppression,” said **Rep. Clay Higgins**.

“Congress must prioritize the establishment of equitable and consistent standards within the horse racing industry. In pursuit of this, we are supporting legislation that promotes improved safety regulations through a thoughtful and pragmatic framework,” said **Rep. Don Davis**.

**Sen. Tom Cotton** stated, “The RHSA will provide horse owners and racetracks flexibility, while also bringing safe and effective regulation to the horseracing industry.”

The RHSA establishes the Racehorse Health and Safety Organization (RHSO), with a Board of Directors appointed by the state racing commissions. Five board members will be appointed by the racing commissions in the states with the most racing days, and four members will be appointed by racing commissions in the remaining states. The RHSO Board will establish three Scientific Medication Control Committees, one for each racing breed: Thoroughbreds, Standardbreds, and Quarter Horses. Committee members will be selected by industry associations and the Board. The RHSO Board will also establish one Racetrack Safety Committee comprised of board- and industry- appointed members that will recommend breed-specific rules to the board. The Board will have the final say on all rules adopted, but it must justify its decisions with scientific evidence. Further, the RHSO will be granted the power to investigate rule violations, but the state racing commission of each participating state will retain enforcement power unless it requests the RHSO to assist with enforcement. Finally, the RHSO will be funded through annual fees from the participating state racing commissions, which will be specific to each breed. Because enforcement will be returned to state racing commissions, the RHSA will drastically reduce the fees placed on horsemen.

States will have two years to decide whether to participate in the compact, but only participating states will be allowed to export simulcast signals for interstate, offsite betting. The RHSA would repeal HISA in its entirety.

In addition to being found unconstitutional twice by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, HISA proved ineffective in other ways.

In 2024, HISA’s enforcement arm came under fire for punishing innocent owners and trainers for miniscule amounts of substances in a horse that have no effect on its performance or health. Over 1,000 horsemen signed a petition by the National HBPA to the Federal Trade Commission to require HISA to establish no-effect thresholds, which would ensure that respected horsemen do not have their reputations and careers ruined over incidental exposures to everyday substances.

"As a veterinarian, I believe the Racehorse Health and Safety Act is a critical step toward ensuring a scientifically sound and constitutionally valid regulatory framework for horse racing," **Doug Daniels, DVM and President of the National HBPA**, stated. “We must prioritize equine health and welfare through veterinary, evidence-based research into medication control and racetrack safety standards. The RHSA will provide the industry with the stability it needs. It is our responsibility — as horsemen, veterinarians, and racing commissions — to collaborate in protecting both the integrity of the sport and the welfare of our human and equine athletes."

“The RHSA is a commonsense bill that is beneficial for both harness racing and Standardbreds,” **Russell Williams, President of the USTA**, said. “It achieves the goal of rule uniformity while respecting the unique characteristics of different racing breeds. Above all, it embraces the principle that the welfare of the horse must always come first. The USTA is proud to endorse this important legislation.”

The North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians fully supports the Racehorse Health and Safety Act,” said **Dr. Nicholas Meittinis, President of the NAARV**. “The Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority is a deeply flawed institution-- one that not only harms the industry but also restricts veterinarians from providing the best possible care to their equine athletes.”

As the Triple Crown season continues, we hope that many other congressional leaders and stakeholders will step into the starting gate alongside Reps. Higgins and Davis, and Sen. Cotton and race to support an industry in urgent need. With your help, horseracing can continue for another 151 years.

**National Groups in Support:**

- National Horsemen Benevolent and Protective Association (National HBPA)
- United States Trotting Association (USTA)
- North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians (NAARV)

**State/Regional Groups in Support:**

- Alabama HBPA
- Arkansas HBPA
- Arizona HBPA
- Charles Town HBPA, West Virginia
- Delaware Standardbred Owners Association
- Finger Lake HBPA, New York
- Florida Standardbred Breeders and Owners Association
- Harness Horse Association of Central New York
- Harness Horsemen’s Association of New England
- Illinois Harness Horseman Association
- Illinois HBPA
- Indiana HBPA
- Meadows Standardbred Owners Association, Pennsylvania
- Minnesota Harness Racing, Inc.
- Minnesota HBPA
- Monticello Harness Horsemen's Association, Inc., New York
- Nebraska HBPA
- Oregon HBPA
- Pennsylvania Harness Horsemen’s Association
- Pennsylvania HBPA
- Standardbred Owners Association of New York
- Tampa Bay HBPA, Florida
- Virginia HBPA
- Washington HBPA
- Western New York Harness Horsemen’s Association