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Mr. John R. Murrell  
President  
Three M Oil Company  
8350 North Central Expressway  
Suite G100  
Dallas, Texas 75206

Dear Mr. Murrell,

Thank you for contacting me with your concerns regarding H.R. 857, the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act. I value your opinion and appreciate this opportunity to respond.

I understand your distress because horses have played a significant role in the history and culture of our country. They are majestic creatures that should be treated humanely and with dignity. Unfortunately, not everyone sees them as you and I do. There are a percentage of horses that are ultimately unwanted by their owners because they are no longer useful and in some cases can even be dangerous. I believe that the current processing of unwanted horses provides a humane alternative to letting these animals suffer from starvation and neglect.

H.R. 857 will prohibit the slaughter of horses for human consumption by prohibiting the transportation of horses intended for human consumption and other purposes. I believe that a ban on the processing of horses for food will not solve the primary problem of unwanted horses. It could actually increase abuse for those horses, such as restrictions on food and water and being left to roam freely. Owner neglect and abuse is the main problem in horses that arrive at processing plants.

Horse transportation is a humane industry and remains under strict USDA regulations. If a federal ban is imposed on the transportation of these horses, they will be classifying themselves as something other than livestock. If they are then not defined as livestock, they will not be protected by the regulations of equine welfare in the U.S. and by the federal, state and local authorities who see that these regulations are followed. The much needed relief currently, and in the future, may be jeopardized if horses are distinguished from other livestock.

I do not believe it is my position to say that it should be illegal in all cultures and that people who depend on horse meat for daily food should be denied it. It is important to note that the percentage of horses that actually are slaughtered for human consumption is very minute and has been decreasing rapidly over the past years. In fact, in 2001, the number of horses sent to

abattoirs was only .9% of the horse population in the United States. The number of horses processed in the U.S., or exported to Canada for processing, decreased from 263,000 in 1992 to 62,000 in 2001.

I would also like to note that some prominent horse associations agree with my position and realize that a ban on unwanted horses will only increase the potential for abuse and neglect.

Again thank you for contacting me with your concerns. I truly appreciate knowing your views. It is the free exchange of thoughts and ideas between us that allows me to most appropriately represent you. With warm regards, I remain

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles".

Charles W. Stenholm  
Member of Congress

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