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SOCIETY

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Date: March 20, 2013

To: **Environment and Natural Resources Committee**
Jackie Dingfelder, Chair
Alan Olsen, Vice-Chair

From: Sharon Harmon
Executive Director, Oregon Humane Society

Re: SB790

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is the state's largest and oldest animal welfare organization, with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization.

We urge you to vote yes on SB 790.

In 2009 the Oregon Legislature voted to include equines in the state's Animal Abandonment statute, implicitly stating that although horses are considered "livestock," in some cases the law should grant them more protection; horse tripping is one of those instances. Not only is the act of horse tripping a cruel endeavor causing inevitable pain or injury to America's beloved horses, it is also an activity already banned by multiple states and notably absent in a number of local rodeos.

Recklessly causing injury to an animal is a crime in Oregon; horse tripping is a reckless activity and frequently causes injury or pain to the equine involved. The average horse weighs over 1,000 pounds and can reach speeds upwards of 40 miles per hour. Abruptly pulling a horse's legs out from under it while it is moving at a full gallop puts the horse at risk of broken limbs or serious injuries to its head and neck. When this activity occurs between adults it is called battery, when it occurs between kids it is called bullying both of which are malicious acts and vehemently condemned by our society; it only follows that we would not endorse a similar practice imposed on horses.

The practice of horse tripping is not a generally accepted practice at Oregon rodeos. The Oregon State Fair boasts "the biggest horse show this side of the Mississippi," and manages to claim that title without offering a horse tripping event to its audience. Banning the practice of horse tripping in Oregon does not create a slippery slope to outlawing all rodeo practices. There are countless ways to demonstrate the strength, agility and athleticism of an equine without subjecting it to an

inherently dangerous exhibition. Oregon should join the growing number of states¹ that have already banned the event.

Horses were a prominent fixture in American history and culture and still are, but not for their performance in the cruel “sport” of horse tripping. In 1775, Paul Revere and his horse warned his fellow patriots about the impending arrests by British troops. In 1860, the Pony Express delivered mail via horseback from Missouri to California. In the 1950s, Roy Rogers and his horse Trigger were icons of Western America as they captivated audiences across the nation. Even as recently as 2004, the movie “Seabiscuit,” a story about an underdog race horse, was nominated for seven Academy Awards. Out of their utility and their bonds with their human counterparts grew a reverence for horses’ contribution to American history and culture. The appreciation of the creature who blazed the Oregon Trail, carried soldiers into battle, powered farm machinery or simply provided companionship has not abated and our laws should reflect that sentiment.

Please vote yes on SB 790.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Photo courtesy oregonlive.com

¹ Florida, Illinois, Maine, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska, California, and Arizona