

TO: SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
FROM: SARAH SELLIN-EILER
RE: SB 790, THE BILL TO STOP HORSE TRIPPING
DATE: MARCH 20, 2013

Chair Hass and Committee Members, my name is Sarah Sellin-Eiler, and my address is 2111 SE 34th St., Portland, OR 97214. I am a small business owner in Oregon, and I am also a horse owner and lifelong equestrian. I grew up around rodeos and have a great respect for the American rodeo tradition. I hope to share some of my personal history to let you know why I am here in strong support of SB 790, and why I feel it's important for Oregon to stop the terrible practice of tripping horses for sport and recreation.

I did hear from a few of you over the past couple of weeks that there were national organizations and animal advocacy groups who spearheaded this campaign last session. I on the other hand, am a horse owner, rider of over 20 years and a small business owner from Portland, OR with no affiliation to any organizations who as well as many people here is very concerned with the issue of horse tripping.

I have felt a close connection with horses since I was a very small child. When I was growing up I had severe learning disabilities to the point where I really couldn't read fully until 6th or 7th grade. School was a nonstop struggle for me. So I grew up incredibly insecure. And having a barn to go to and horses to ride really gave me something to actually be confident about. Where I was rewarded for my hard work. And not only that but horses taught me responsibility, tenacity, how to build a relationship, respect, compassion, the lesson to never quit and most importantly how to care for something other than myself.

Having all of these experiences as a child was a true gift. But the most important lesson I learned was to respect those who are without a voice and still do as you ask even if they have no choice in the matter. Horses are completely reliant on humans – for space to graze, for food, for water, for a home. Sensitivity and compassion are key to having a successful and rewarding relationship with such an animal. So after my lifetime of over 20 years, holding these animals in such high regard I hear of horse tripping and it brought me tears.

Horses got me through some of the hardest times in my life, and it is so disappointing and so hard for me to comprehend why a practice would even be in existence. But the fact is that it does happen here in Oregon, both in so-called "ranch" rodeos in eastern Oregon, and in "charreada" rodeos in the Portland area.

SB 790 is a modest, common-sense measure to protect horses from the cruelty of tripping for sport and recreation. Horse tripping is not practiced in mainstream rodeos sanctioned by the PRCA. It does not happen in the Pendleton Roundup, the St. Paul Rodeo, the Sisters Rodeo, or any of the other major rodeos in Oregon. Small groups of individuals get together and hold their events away from public view.

They chase young horses, often yearlings, into the arena, and rope their front legs out from under them, causing them to crash headfirst into the dirt. These young horses too often suffer crippling injuries, and they are so psychologically traumatized that often they can never bring themselves to trust people again.

SB 790 is not intended to affect mainstream rodeo in any way. Many of the states that have banned horse tripping are cowboy states that still enjoy a strong rodeo tradition. This bill is not intended to interfere with legitimate roping that occurs on ranches and farms. It only applies to equines, or members of the horse family, and it only applies to horse tripping that happens for recreation or sport.

Horses have fought wars with us. They've transported us for hundreds of years. And now they deserve to be treated with at least ½ the decency as we treat one another with. Please don't let these amazing animals go to waste.

Thank you so much for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Sarah Sellin-Eiler
2111 SE 34th St.
Portland, OR 97214
c. 503-319-3003
e. cassidyjewelry@gmail.com