

To: The House Committee on Judiciary, Mr. Chair
From: David Aiken

Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to read this letter expressing my grave concerns about Senate Bill 835.

The bill on its face seems to be perfectly innocuous, a well meaning proposition to stop what appears to be an odious practice--"tripping" horses. To begin, the word "tripping" is a misnomer. It refers to the practice of Great Basin buckaroos and cowboys of roping horses by the head and front feet. (Roping the hind feet injures the horses and is never done by any working buckaroo or cowboy). Proponents of the bill show a horse falling on its muzzle; this is only one instance, not the norm. I have attended numerous ranch rodeos and have not seen this occurring. Almost always, horses front leg roped fall on their sides if they fall at all!

So why rope them at all? Many ranch horses, indeed most, are on the open range. They are not in stables. How to capture and doctor these horses? "Here, Horsey"? I think not. For decades Great Basin buckaroos and cowboys have been roping horses by the front legs as a necessary part of their ranch work. It is a highly skilled activity performed in all of Oregon's high desert Great Basin counties. Because horse roping is a skilled activity, these hardworking Eastern Oregonians get together in community ranch rodeos to test and perfect their horse roping skills.

The rodeos are important community activities in such places as Jordan Valley, Paisley, Halfway, Burns, McDermott and others. Try to attend one or more of these Eastern Oregon ranch rodeos if you can. You'll see for yourself the men and women who perform these activities as part of their ranch work. I'm amazed at the skill required and how few of the total are actually roped.

Some have said that the Professional Rodeo Cowboy's Association (PRCA) has "outlawed" so called "horse-tripping". "Outlawed", what does that mean? To whom does such "outlawing" apply? The claim is meaningless. It applies to the fact that horse roping as a competitive activity is not performed at PRCA rodeos, an association wishing to dominate rodeo activity in the Western United States. Ranch rodeos and horse roping are a very local activity of hardworking ranch men and women (YES, women) making a contest from their everyday ranch skills. Where are the women in PRCA rodeos? No place except barrel racing, and the barrel racing itself is not a PRCA activity.

The Senate hearing on this bill came up during calving season in Eastern Oregon. Coincidence? I hope so. I requested that the chair hold another hearing because of the short notice and time of year of the first hearing. She said "no".

I'm sure that the proponents of this bill are well meaning people concerned with animal rights. I suggest that perhaps they are not fully informed. Horses are a very valuable tool in ranch work and their welfare is of primary concern to all buckaroos and

cowboys. None of these folk is interested in injuring their valuable animals.

I am David Franklin Aiken, 7430 SE 35th Avenue in Portland, 97202-8322. My cell phone number is 503-929-9553. I've been most fortunate since retiring to be able to work some of every month on an Eastern Oregon ranch and to actually work some ranch rodeos. This vital social community activity is part of life in our state's eastern part and I'd be happy to answer questions to the best of my abilities on my all positive experience.

Ladies and gentlemen, this bill is a humbug. Please do not vote for a bill which hurts our Eastern Oregon citizens.