

December 15, 2013

Congressman Ed Whitfield
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear sir:

My name is Carl Bledsoe. I'm writing this letter to you regarding the soring problem within the Tennessee Walking Horse Industry. I was a second generation Tennessee Walking Horse trainer ("was" being the key word) licensed through the Walking Horse Trainers Association, license #88035. I have not renewed my license in the last year and a half. I live in small town about and 1.5 hours north of Atlanta. I grew up in the industry, being the son of a trainer as well, and I feel that I can share a perspective from the inside.

About five years ago, it became abundantly clear to me that the training methods used on our breed for show purposes was completely wrong. Growing up in the industry, it was common place to use these methods to prepare these horses for competition and/or sale. I've seen and have used every sort of caustic agent that can be used to enhance and to achieve the "big lick" gait. It excited me to see one sit down on his hocks and step up against the chains and "reach" and now I realize that the horse was put in a great deal of pain, physically and emotionally, and it was simply struggling to move. It sickens me now to realize the difference. There is no way physically possible for these horses to perform this desired "big lick" without the following:

*chemicals - Mustard oil, Croton oil, lamp oil, Kerosene, diesel fuel, Amoco white gas, hand cleaner, Dawn dish detergent, Iodine, Ether, baby oil, Scarlet oil, Castor oil, Glycerin, W-D 40 (my personal favorite) or a combination of these chemicals

*pressure shoeing (upon request, I can explain in detail)

The industry will argue the point that they are 98% compliant simply because they are still able to pass inspection due to the fact that the soring is done several days prior to competition while ignoring the fact that the soring still took place. That's why I believe the only way to eliminate the pain inflicted on the horses and end the abuse is to remove the "packages and chains". This group of people is conditioned to believing that there is a difference between a "show ready" horse versus a "sore horse". Also, many owners pretend that they are unaware of the abuse because they are not present when it takes place.

Along with soring horses for competition, I have also been a party to pay offs in the show arena and the inspection arena as well. These accusations will be hard to prove, although they do exist.

I've been at a cross roads with whether or not I should share my story for the last three years. I've been very hesitant because of the long arm of retaliation within the industry. I finally made the decision this spring to remove all performance horses from my barn and no longer train horses with any shoes other than keg shoes. This was a difficult decision because not only was it my

only means of income, it was also a huge part of my life as I had always known it. It's amazing at the number of friendships lost when you decide to take a stand for what's right. I choose the horse in this situation. With that being said, I'm happier now than I've ever been. I now work with all breeds and disciplines and I am now able to enjoy my job by helping others learn to communicate with their horses rather than intimidate them.

Should you need to speak with me regarding any of the above state information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be glad to assist you in any way possible with this effort. (cell 770-510-3317 barn 770-893-4820)

Respectfully,

Carl Bledsoe