

Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2009 Introduced in Senate

Date: March 31, 2009

On March 26, 2009, Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) introduced the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2009 (S. 727). This bill is identical to a bill by the same name (H.R. 503) introduced by Representative John Conyers (D-MI) in the House of Representatives on January 14.

The bill would criminalize the possession, transport, sale, delivery, or receiving in interstate or foreign commerce of a horse or horse meat with the intent that it be used for human consumption. It would thus apply to the transport and sale of horses for slaughter in the U.S. or to a foreign country.

Penalties would include fines and/or one year imprisonment for a first offense or one involving five or fewer horses. Offenses involving more than five horses or repeat offenders would face increased fines and/or up to three years imprisonment.

The bill amends Title 18 of the U.S. criminal code, which deals with animal cruelty prohibitions.

In the previous Congress (110th) Senator Landrieu introduced related legislation, "The Virgie S. Arden American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act," (S. 311). That bill amended the Horse Protection Act (HPA), which was enacted in 1970 to prohibit the showing, transport or sale of horses that have been subjected to any painful process to accentuate their gate. The Animal & Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture enforces the HPA. S. 311 was referred to and approved by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

Because the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act amends the criminal code rather than HPA It has been referred to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. The Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), is a co-sponsor of this legislation. The Bill currently has 14 co-sponsors.