

**MISSOURI RESIDENTS —
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**EVERYONE —
CONTACT MISSOURI LAWMAKERS**

MISSOURI AGRICULTURE POLICY COMMITTEE:

MO House of Representatives
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City MO 65101

Tom Loehner (R), Chair, Agriculture Policy
Committee; Room 413A
ph: 573-751-1344; fax: 573-526-7739
email: Tom.Loehner@house.mo.gov

Billy Pat Wright (R), Vice Chair, Agriculture Policy
Committee; Room 304B
ph: 573-751-1494; fax: 573-526-0784
email: Billy.Wright@house.mo.gov

Dan Brown (R), MO House of Representatives
Room 235BA; ph: 573-751-5713
email: Dan.Brown@house.mo.gov

Belinda Harris (D), MO House of Representatives
Room 115E; ph: 573-751-2398; fax: 573-526-1963
email: Belinda.Harris@house.mo.gov

Steve Hodges (D), MO House of Representatives
Room 103BA; ph: 573-751-4085; fax: 573-522-6087
email: Steve.Hodges@house.mo.gov

Rebecca McClanahan (D), MO House of
Representatives; Room 101A
ph: 573-751-4042; fax: 573-522-6055
email: Rebecca.McClanahan@house.mo.gov

Bob Nance (R), MO House of Representatives
Room 207B; ph: 573-751-1468; fax: 573-526-1110
email: Bob.Nance@house.mo.gov

Darrell Pollock (R), MO House of Representatives
Room 408B; ph: 573-751-4451; fax: 573-526-9781
email: Darrell.Pollock@house.mo.gov

Therese Sander (R), MO House of Representatives
Room 404A; ph: 573-751-6566; fax: 573-522-4988
email: Therese.Sander@house.mo.gov

Ed Schieffer (D), MO House of Representatives
Room 103BB; ph: 573-751-9459; fax: 573-522-1459
email: Ed.Schieffer@house.mo.gov

Charles Schlottach (R), MO House of
Representatives; Room 314

ph: 573-751-6668; fax: 573-522-8036
email: Charlie.Schlottach@house.mo.gov

Terry Witte (D), MO House of Representatives
Room 110A; ph: 573-751-9614; fax: 573-526-0905
email: Terry.Witte@house.mo.gov

**AGRICULTURE POLICY COMMITTEE + ENTIRE
MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:**

Sue.Allen@house.mo.gov,
Bert.Atkins@house.mo.gov,
Joe.Aull@house.mo.gov,
NitaJane.Ayres@house.mo.gov,
Kenny.Biermann@house.mo.gov,
Walt.Bivins@house.mo.gov,
Ellen.Brandom@house.mo.gov,
Rachel.Bringer@house.mo.gov,
Dan.Brown@house.mo.gov,
Jason.Brown@house.mo.gov,
Michael.Brown@house.mo.gov,
Mark.Bruns@house.mo.gov,
Eric.Burlison@house.mo.gov,
John.Burnett@house.mo.gov,
Don.Calloway@house.mo.gov,
Chris.Carter@house.mo.gov,
Ron.Casey@house.mo.gov,
Maria.ChappelleNadal@house.mo.gov,
Mike.Colona@house.mo.gov,
Pat.Conway@house.mo.gov,
Wayne.Cooper@house.mo.gov,
Michael.Corcoran@house.mo.gov,
Stanley.Cox@house.mo.gov,
Mike.Cunningham@house.mo.gov,
Shalonn.Curls@house.mo.gov,
Cynthia.Davis@house.mo.gov,
David.Day@house.mo.gov,
Bill.Deeken@house.mo.gov,
Charlie.Denison@house.mo.gov,
Mike.Dethrow@house.mo.gov,
Scott.Dieckhaus@house.mo.gov,
John.Diehl@house.mo.gov,
Bob.Dixon@house.mo.gov,
Curt.Dougherty@house.mo.gov,
Tony.Dugger@house.mo.gov,
Gary.Dusenberg@house.mo.gov,
Ed.Emery@house.mo.gov,
Vicki.Englund@house.mo.gov

Doug.Ervin@house.mo.gov,
Sally.Faith@house.mo.gov,
Joe.FallertJr@house.mo.gov,
Linda.Fischer@house.mo.gov,
Barney.Fisher@house.mo.gov,
Thomas.Flanigan@house.mo.gov,
Tim.Flook@house.mo.gov,
Michael.Frame@house.mo.gov,
Ward.Franz@house.mo.gov,
Doug.Funderburk@house.mo.gov,

Chuck.Gatschenberger@house.mo.gov,
Jason.Grill@house.mo.gov,
Jeff.Grisamore@house.mo.gov,
Casey.Guernsey@house.mo.gov,
Jim.Guest@house.mo.gov,
Belinda.Harris@house.mo.gov,
Steve.Hobbs@house.mo.gov,
Steve.Hodges@house.mo.gov,
Jason.Holsman@house.mo.gov,
Denny.Hoskins@house.mo.gov,
leonard.hughes@house.mo.gov,
Jake.Hummel@house.mo.gov,
Allen.lcet@house.mo.gov,
Kenny.Jones@house.mo.gov,
Tim.Jones@house.mo.gov,
Tishaura.Jones@house.mo.gov,
Jason.Kander@house.mo.gov,
Shelley.Keeney@house.mo.gov,
Chris.Kelly@house.mo.gov,
Gayle.Kingery@house.mo.gov,
Jeanne.Kirkton@house.mo.gov,
Andrew.Koenig@house.mo.gov,
Sam.Komo@house.mo.gov,
Michele.Kratky@house.mo.gov,
Will.Kraus@house.mo.gov,
JC.Kuessner@house.mo.gov,
Mike.Lair@house.mo.gov,
Sara.Lampe@house.mo.gov,
Scott.Largent@house.mo.gov

Mike.Leara@house.mo.gov,
Roman.LeBlanc@house.mo.gov,
Paul.Levota@house.mo.gov,
Albert.Liese@house.mo.gov,
Scott.Lipke@house.mo.gov,
Tom.Loehner@house.mo.gov,
Beth.Low@house.mo.gov,
Rebecca.McClanahan@house.mo.gov,
Tom.McDonald@house.mo.gov,
Mike.McGhee@house.mo.gov,
Cole.McNary@house.mo.gov,
Margo.McNeil@house.mo.gov,
Tim.Meadows@house.mo.gov,
Kate.Meiners@house.mo.gov,
Chris.Molendorp@house.mo.gov,
James.Morris@house.mo.gov,
Brian.Munzlinger@house.mo.gov,
Bob.Nance@house.mo.gov,
Jamilah.Nasheed@house.mo.gov,
Stacey.Newman@house.mo.gov,
Brian.Nieves@house.mo.gov,
Jerry.Nolte@house.mo.gov,
Charlie.Norr@house.mo.gov,
Jeanette.Oxford@house.mo.gov,
Sharon.Pace@house.mo.gov,
Mark.Parkinson@house.mo.gov,
Mike.Parson@house.mo.gov,

Darrell.Pollock@house.mo.gov,
Bryan.Pratt@house.mo.gov,
Paul.Quinn@house.mo.gov,
Ronald.Richard@house.mo.gov,
Jeanie.Riddle@house.mo.gov,
Jeff.Roorda@house.mo.gov,
Martin.Rucker@house.mo.gov,
Marilyn.Ruestman@house.mo.gov,
Don.Ruzicka@house.mo.gov,
Ray.Salva@house.mo.gov,
Therese.Sander@house.mo.gov,
David.Sater@house.mo.gov,
Luke.Scavuzzo@house.mo.gov,
Rob.Schaaf@house.mo.gov,
Rodney.Schad@house.mo.gov,
Dwight.Scharnhorst@house.mo.gov,
Ed.Schieffer@house.mo.gov

Charlie.Schlottach@house.mo.gov,
Shane.Schoeller@house.mo.gov,
Sue.Schoemehl@house.mo.gov,
Jill.Schupp@house.mo.gov,
Tom.Self@house.mo.gov,
Tom.Shively@house.mo.gov,
Ryan.Silvey@house.mo.gov,
Trent.Skaggs@house.mo.gov,
Jason.Smith@house.mo.gov,
Joe.Smith@house.mo.gov,
Michael.Spreng@house.mo.gov,
Bryan.Stevenson@house.mo.gov,
Mary.Still@house.mo.gov,
Rachel.Storch@house.mo.gov,
Rick.Stream@house.mo.gov,
Mike.Sutherland@house.mo.gov,
Terry.Swinger@house.mo.gov,
Mike.Talboy@house.mo.gov,
Mike.Thomson@house.mo.gov,
Steven.Tilley@house.mo.gov,
Tom.Todd@house.mo.gov,
Clint.Tracy@house.mo.gov,
Jim.Viebrock@house.mo.gov,
Michael.Vogt@house.mo.gov,
Maynard.Wallace@house.mo.gov,
Gina.Walsh@house.mo.gov,
Rochelle.Gray@house.mo.gov,
Jay.Wasson@house.mo.gov,
Steve.Webb@house.mo.gov,
Don.Wells@house.mo.gov,
Raymond.Weter@house.mo.gov,
Hope.Whitehead@house.mo.gov,
Kevin.Wilson@house.mo.gov,
Terry.Witte@house.mo.gov,
Billy.Wright@house.mo.gov,
Patricia.Yaeger@house.mo.gov,
Anne.Zerr@house.mo.gov,
Jake.Zimmerman@house.mo.gov

Missouri House of Representatives:

Please reject Rep. Jim Viebrock's bill to sidestep federal rules that bar horse slaughter for human consumption. If passed, H.B. 1747 lets horse processors operate in Missouri — even though no equine plants legally function in the U.S. right now. While supporters insist slaughter "saves" horses from neglect and starvation, their argument fails to recognize:

— "Americans oppose horse slaughter by an overwhelming margin," says Glen Bolger, national pollster and founding partner of the nonpartisan Public Opinion Strategies (POS). In a 2007 poll, POS found that 71% want horses preserved as part of American cultural heritage. Nearly half are less likely to vote for a Congressperson who is against a horse slaughter ban.

— Equine plants are known polluters that congest sewers and contaminate land and water.

— Under Missouri Anti-Cruelty Statutes Chapter 578, animal abandonment is a crime punishable by fines and jail time. Rather than advocate slaughter as an alternative to neglect, lawmakers ought to enforce criminal prosecution.

— Slaughter is NOT humane euthanasia. Methods to stun and kill cows and pigs are excruciating when used on horses. Nonetheless, these excitable, long-necked animals are subjected to captive bolt pistols that often don't render them insensible. Some remain aware while killed.

— Overpopulation stems from industries such as Premarin and Prempro (HRT drugs made from mare urine); carriage horses; riding stables, etc. that over-breed horses. Focus should shift to breeding oversight and responsible care. Moreover, there is no documented connection between closure of domestic plants and a spike in horse abuse cases. In contrast, slaughter supplies a "dumping ground" for irresponsible breeders and caretakers.

H.B. 1747 wants to impose a U.S. market for horsemeat on a nation that doesn't want it. The Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act, H.R. 503/S.B. 727, currently before Congress, bans possession, shipment, transport, purchase, sale, delivery or receipt of any horse for the purpose of human ingestion. In 2006 Congress cut off funding for mandatory ante-mortem inspection of horses. This defunding was reinstated in the 2010 Appropriations Act. It is illegal to kill uninspected horses under the Federal Meat Inspection Act.

In 2007 the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals proclaimed horse slaughter illegal in Texas, home to two foreign-owned equine plants. Later that year, U.S. District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly froze America's last kill plant in DeKalb, Illinois for its failure to assess environmental impacts of horse slaughter, in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Missouri's proposed "rebirth" of a doomed industry is economically and ethically shortsighted. Horse slaughter is a no-win for horses and people. Please do not support H.B. 1747.

Sincerely,