American Driving Society • American Endurance Ride Conference • American Horse Council
American Morgan Horse Association • American Quarter Horse Association
Back Country Horsemen of America • Breeders' Cup Limited • Certified Horsemanship Association
Equestrian Land Conservation Resource • Masters of Foxhounds Association
North American Trail Ride Conference • Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association
United States Equestrian Federation • United States Eventing Association, Inc.
…and 28 State and Local Horse Organizations

May 20, 2009

Dear Congressional Horse Caucus Member:

As a member of the Congressional Horse Caucus, the undersigned organizations urge you to cosponsor the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, H.R. 1831.

Pastureland, riding trails, horse farms, show grounds, and hay fields have long been a part of American cultural landscapes, yet today they are facing impending threat of development, with 5,000 acres of land disappearing every day in America. This incentive will help to ensure the horse community remains viable, and that future generations will have somewhere in their community left to ride.

Contrary to popular belief, horsemanship is not an elite sport, but a favorite pastime of middle America. Increasingly, middle class farmers and ranchers cannot afford to hold onto their land, and thus, open space for the horse community is lost. This legislation encourages voluntary, incentive-based donations of development rights to ensure such lands remain open, and in production. In 2006, Congress enhanced the tax deduction for donations of conservation easements, but this important conservation tool is set to expire at the end of 2009.

For the farmer, rancher and horseman, a conservation donation may mean giving away their family's single largest asset. Previous law prevented modest-income landowners from deducting more than a small portion of their generous gift. The enhanced incentive allows agricultural landowners to deduct more of the value of their donation, up to their full income for 16 years.

The 2008 Farm Bill renewed the incentive through December 2009, but landowners considering a perpetual commitment to conservation should not be pressured by a deadline, and many will never begin the process without the reassurance of a permanent incentive. Please join Congressmen Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Eric Cantor (R-VA) as a co-sponsor of the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, H.R. 1831, by contacting Travis Robey in Rep. Thompson's office (5-3311) or Wyatt Stewart in Rep. Cantor's office (5-2815).

Thank you for your continued commitment to safeguarding the horse community, farm and ranch land, rural economies and conserving our natural resources.

Sincerely,

Susie Koos Acker, Executive Director
American Driving Society

Kathleen A. Henkel, Executive Director
American Endurance Ride Conference

James J. Hickey, Jr., President
American Horse Council

Julie M. Broadway, Executive Director
American Morgan Horse Association

Barbara Linke, Director of Public Policy
American Quarter Horse Association

Dennis Dailey, Executive Dir. of Issues & Policy
Back Country Horsemen of America

Gregory Avioli, President and CEO
Breeders' Cup Limited

Christy Landwehr, Chief Executive Officer
Certified Horsemanship Association

Deb Balliet, Chief Executive Officer
Equestrian Land Conservation Resource

Dennis Foster, Executive Director
Masters of Foxhounds Association

Helen Koehler, President
Goethe Trail (FL)

Caren Stauffer, Treasurer
South Eastern Distance Riders Association (FL)

Linda Sanders, President
Shawnee Trail Conservancy (IL)

Pattie Stalder, Administrator
Kansas Horse Council (KS)

Edith Conyers, President
Central Kentucky Back Country Horsemen of America (KY)

Emily Dennis, President
Fort Harrod Back Country Horsemen (KY)

Alice & Ferrier Martin, Owners
Hundred Acre Wood Farm (KY)

Ginny Grulke, Executive Director
Kentucky Horse Council (KY)

David Switzer, Executive Director
KY Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders (KY)

Ginny Howard, President
Masterson Equestrian Trust Foundation (KY)

Becky Kalagher, President
Bay State Trail Riders Association (MA)

David Tobin, President
Equestrian Partners in Conservation (MD)

Cricket Goodall, Executive Director
Maryland Horse Breeders Association (MD)

Sharon Greene, Executive Dir. of Public Relations
Highland Equestrian Conservancy (MI)

Laurie DiNatale, Executive Administrator
North American Trail Ride Conference

Dan Metzger, President
Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association

John Long, Chief Executive Officer
United States Equestrian Federation

Jo Whitehouse, CEO
United States Eventing Association, Inc.

Marianne Jackson Amsden, President
Gallatin Equestrian Partnership (MT)

Sue Gray, Executive Director
North Carolina Horse Council (NC)

Joan Ganotis, ELCR Liaison/Conservation Chair
New Hampshire Horse Council (NH)

Kevin Mitchell, President
Heritage and Agricultural Association (NJ)

Tricia Haertlein, President
Hunterdon County Horse & Pony Association (NJ)

Dottie Allen, Corresponding Secretary
New Jersey Horse Council (NJ)

Diane Holtaway, President
Somerset Bridle Path Association (NJ)

Susan Data-Samtak, President
Somerset County Horse & Pony Association (NJ)

Kimberly Herslow, Owner
Upper Creek Farm (NJ)

Sam Uliano, President
Nassau Suffolk Horsmen's Association (NY)

Jeffrey A. Cannizzo, Executive Director
New York Thoroughbred Breeders, Inc. (NY)

Robert Hoffa, President
Pennsylvania Equine Council (PA)

James L. Edwards, VP of External Affairs
South Carolina Horsmen's Council (SC)

Sally Aungier, 2nd Vice President
Virginia Horse Council (VA)