

How the 2025 PAST Act Bill Mirrors the Horse Protection Act New Rule:

The **2025 PAST Act Bill** is essentially the Congressional attempt to make permanent the key provisions introduced previously through administrative regulation known as the **Horse Protection Act New Rule**. Both share strikingly similar core provisions, though the PAST Act would embed these permanently into federal law.

Key Similarities Between the HPA New Rule and the 2025 PAST Act Bill:

1. **Banning Action Devices and Pads:**
 - Both explicitly ban action devices (chains, rollers, collars) and performance-enhancing pads or wedges, commonly associated with soring, focusing particularly on Tennessee Walking, Racking, and Spotted Saddle Horses.
2. **Inspection and Enforcement Changes:**
 - Both shift inspection authority from industry-approved Designated Qualified Persons (DQPs) to USDA-licensed inspectors, significantly expanding USDA oversight.
3. **Stronger Penalties:**
 - Both include substantial increases in fines and penalties for violations, with disqualifications ranging from 180 days up to several years.
4. **Expanded Definition of “Participate”:**
 - Both redefine participation broadly to include not just exhibitors but also those who transport horses, instruct exhibitors, or are knowingly present in restricted areas of horse events.

Thus, the 2025 PAST Act essentially transforms previously proposed regulatory guidelines under the HPA New Rule into permanent, legislated federal law, making it much more difficult for future administrations to alter or remove these rules.

New Events Covered Under the HPA New Rule & 2025 PAST Act:

The original HPA was primarily designed to regulate competitive horse shows involving Tennessee Walking Horses, Racking Horses, and related breeds to prevent soring.

The new language significantly broadens the scope:

- **Horse Exhibitions:**
Includes events like parades, rodeos, demonstrations, fairs, exhibitions open to public viewing—activities previously exempted or less strictly enforced under the original HPA.
- **Horse Sales and Auctions:**
Previously less scrutinized, these events now require USDA oversight and can face inspections of all horses presented, regardless of breed, simply due to presence of regulated breeds.

- **Private and Public Events:**
Even small-scale events, fundraisers, charity shows, clinics, or demonstrations are now subject to USDA oversight if involving even a single regulated breed horse.

How the Scope of Both the HPA New Rule and PAST Act Extends Far Beyond Tennessee Walking and Racking Horses:

While framed around the very specific issue of "soring," the broader language and stricter enforcement provisions of the 2025 PAST Act and the new HPA Rule create regulatory overreach, indirectly affecting the entire horse industry:

1. Justification vs. Compliance Reality:

- The USDA's own data historically demonstrates a **98% compliance rate** with the existing Horse Protection Act regulations in Tennessee Walking and Racking Horse events.
- Despite this very high compliance rate, both the PAST Act and the HPA New Rule justify vastly expanded regulatory powers under the assumption of widespread abuse, creating concern of disproportionate federal intervention.

2. Collateral Impact on All Horse Breeds:

- The presence of USDA inspectors at any mixed-breed event due to the attendance of a single Tennessee Walker or Racking Horse potentially subjects all horses and their handlers—irrespective of breed—to inspection, surveillance, and enforcement actions.
- Other breeds not historically associated with soring, such as Quarter Horses, Arabians, Morgans, Saddlebreds, Standardbreds, Thoroughbreds, or Warmbloods, will find themselves indirectly scrutinized simply by participating at mixed-breed events.

3. Federal Overreach Concerns:

- This bill infringes upon constitutional protections and property rights. Owners and exhibitors, regardless of breed, face loss of autonomy in decision-making regarding management and training of their horses.
- It effectively shifts the federal approach toward an **animal rights philosophy** (limiting and regulating human-animal relationships) instead of the established **animal welfare philosophy** (promoting responsible animal care within reasonable boundaries).

4. Higher Costs, Reduced Opportunities:

- Increased federal oversight and licensing of inspectors leads to financial burdens on event organizers and participants.
- Rising costs and complex regulatory environments may discourage horse show organizers, exhibitors, and even audiences, ultimately reducing opportunities and participation industry-wide.

How the Legislation Uses a Specific Problem to Broaden Federal Authority:

Both the PAST Act and the HPA New Rule utilize a highly emotionally charged issue—soring—to justify a sweeping expansion of federal authority and inspection power throughout the horse industry. While originally enacted to specifically address abuses in the Tennessee Walking and related breeds, these regulations are now effectively being leveraged as a vehicle to expand government oversight and control across the entire equestrian sector.

In summary, the 2025 PAST Act Bill and the Horse Protection Act New Rule share virtually identical regulations but differ mainly in permanence and enforceability. Both significantly expand federal oversight into horse shows, sales, exhibitions, and events far beyond just the Tennessee Walking Horse and Racking Horse breeds. These regulatory expansions occur despite existing evidence of high compliance rates, leading many horse industry participants to unjustified federal overreach. Horse owners and stakeholders across all breeds should proactively advocate to protect their rights and traditions against disproportionate regulatory actions.