

Governor Schweitzer,

I am writing to ask you to sign the bill as it is, because it is so important to provide any company who might be thinking of investing in Montana as much assurance as you can that their investment would not be for naught.

If Montana can open a horse processing plant, it will be a tremendous boon to the horse industry nationwide. Even if we never send a horse to slaughter, the fact that horse owners' rights and options are preserved will help the horse market recover and increase the value of all horses. As it is, we have seen our net worth that is represented by the horses we own plummet by 70% to 80%. A saddle horse that we could expect \$10,000 to \$12,000 for two years ago...we're lucky to get \$2,000 today.

Of course the general decline in the economy has had some effect on the decimation of the horse market, along with the closure of processing options in the US...but the economy has also created an even larger and more tragic unintended consequence in the tripling of abandoned, neglected and starving horses nation-wide. It used to be that when a horse owning family fell upon hard times, one of the options they had was to sell their horses and liquidate that asset into much needed cash. Now, more often than not, horses cannot be sold because these misguided actions have eliminated markets and what we have done is turn a valuable asset into an expensive liability. While I do not have reports for Montana or other states, I can share with you the Wyoming Board of Livestock statistics which clearly shows a tripling of increasingly horrifying numbers of starved and abandoned horses that our livestock agency has had to deal with--the anecdotal evidence from across the nation tells me that this is a wide-spread and disastrous trend.

Thank you so much for your consideration. The eyes of the horse people of the nation are upon you. We understand that you are receiving enormous pressure from animal rights activists and environmental organizations...but we hope you will stand with rural America, your traditional ranching heritage, and the rights of livestock owners...not to mention a great economic benefit to your state by signing HB 418 into law.

Sincerely,