

Wild Horse Preservation League
P.O. Box 1958 - Dayton, Nevada 89403
775-220-6806/ mattonco@prodigy.net
www.wildhorsepl.org/ www.wildhorseadventure.net

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To the Nevada Commission on Wildlife

Re: Proposed Letter from Chairman Lent to Congress opposing HR-1018

My name is Bonnie Matton and I am president of the Wild Horse Preservation League. Thank you for letting me take a few moments of your time to express the opinion of literally millions of Americans – that HR-1018 should be passed by Congress. Dr. Lent's draft letter to Congress has some very serious flaws in it which I would like to point out. I believe Dr. Lent is not knowledgeable enough regarding the BLM's Wild Horse & Burro Program to present coherent arguments that Congress would be likely to consider.

I recently spoke at the Lyon County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife. After presenting this letter, there was much discussion over the various ramifications involving HR-1018 and Chairman Lent's proposed letter. Subsequently, the board voted to unanimously recommend the chairman withdraw the letter and instead form a subcommittee or workgroup that includes participation from the various parties of interest for the purpose of drafting some practical recommendations with respect to the continued management of wild horses in Nevada.

I feel compelled to mention there are some wonderful and caring people on the ground level of the Wild Horse & Burro Program. But, in years past and continuing into the present, rather than working on improving the herd management areas, the solution coming down from Washington has always been to wait for a crisis and then round up horses. BLM keeps on saying they need to get to appropriate animal management levels (AMLs). But, this will never happen unless 'proper' range management practices are put into effect, e.g., improving the range with seeding, improving riparian areas which will benefit not only the wild horses, but wildlife and livestock as well. And, instead of directing funds into larger and larger roundups, BLM should be designating funds into scientific research for longer-term birth control methods. These enormous roundups, creating financial burdens on taxpayers, need not ever to happen again. After all these years, we have yet to see a really successful BLM range management model. A growing number of American citizens are saying, "Enough is enough!"

My husband is on BLM's Western Great Basin Regional Advisory Council. He continuously recommends changes have to be made to the Wild Horse & Burro Program so it will finally work. But, those changes are only likely if the various parties of interest work together towards commonly-accepted solutions.

Dr. Lent said in his draft, "Wild horses are ill-adapted to handle changes in the landscape." Nothing could be further from the truth! It is their ability to adapt that makes these animals truly remarkable and able to exist successfully.

In 1971, Washington declared: "Congress finds and declares that wild free-roaming horses and burros are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West; that they contribute to the diversity of life forms within the Nation and enrich the lives of the American people." That declaration was the product of the expressed will of the American people and that expressed will has not changed as evidenced by Nevada's state quarter and the unprecedented success of the "Wild and Free" Nevada wild horse license plates.

Nevada's economy is highly dependent upon tourism. We are constantly receiving letters, phone calls and emails from people asking, "*Where can we see the wild horses?*" Because of this, the League recently received two grants, one from the Nevada Commission on Tourism and from Horse Power - the nonprofit organization responsible for the wild horse license plates. We are publishing a booklet (please see attached letter) to develop additional opportunities for Nevada's wild horses and burros to attract new eco-tourism dollars into the state. This money would go primarily to rural communities, many of which are suffering greatly due to the current economic situation.

The League has also received many thousands of letters and signatures supporting the preservation of these incredible animals and it is clear they will continue to be part of Nevada's landscape. So, if we want to get anywhere on this issue, all parties have to accept the facts and address the needs of the range to support all of its creatures who exist on it.

The real solution does not lie in a futile attack on HR-1018. The solution lies in our working together to make the Federal Government finally responsible for properly maintaining our public lands and improve our public lands so they can successfully sustain all of the animals that inhabit them.

The Nevada Wildlife Commission can choose to be part of this consensus addressing these important range issues, or it can choose to take a provocative and divisive position. The sensible horse advocates would rather be part of a cooperative effort to bring about modern and practical management practices than engage in yet another confrontation. However, it will be up to the Wildlife Commission as to which path we will all take in this matter.

Again, thank you for your time. I remain,

Sincerely,



H. Bonnie Matton

Attachment