

**WASHINGTON, DC**– November 7, 2007 –Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID) introduced the *Preserving our Equine Heritage on Public Lands Act (S. 2283)* on November 1st. This bill is similar to the so-called “Right-to-Ride” bill that was introduced in the last Congress by Senator Crapo.

“Senator Crapo has been a champion of preserving riders’ access to public lands,” said American Horse Council (AHC) President Jay Hickey. “He has retooled the bill he introduced in the last Congress and we appreciate his steadfastness in introducing the legislation again. Equestrians are going to have to let Congress know that they are concerned about access to trails and public lands and that they support this bill if we hope to get it passed.”

The bill directs the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to manage the federal lands under their jurisdiction “in a manner that preserves and facilitates the continued use and access of pack and saddle stock animals” on lands on which “there is a historical tradition” of use. The bill provides that such lands “shall remain open and accessible to the use of pack and saddle stock animals” where there is such a tradition. The bill applies to the management of the National Park System, BLM lands, National Wildlife Refuge System land, and National Forest System land.

The bill does not limit the federal agencies’ ultimate authority to restrict such use, provided the agencies perform the review required under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The bill would also impose additional specific and designated procedures to be followed by agencies before any land closures. These procedures include advance notice of any proposed reduction in use to allow public comment, convening a public meeting near the area involved, and collaboration with various users during the process.

Those who enjoy riding on public lands have been concerned about the reduction of trails and public lands available to horses and pack stock. This bill recognizes the importance of saddle and pack stock in the settling, exploration and recreation of our country by ensuring that the horse’s historic and traditional use is recognized as our public lands are managed by the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service.

Hickey further stated, “The AHC thanks Senator Crapo for introducing this important bill. Horses are an immensely important part of American culture, history and heritage. This bill recognizes the strength of the horse industry and helps to preserve time-honored American traditions and values.”