

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4011

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Brief Description: Requesting federal legislation to preserve the use and access of pack and saddle stock animals on public lands.

Sponsors: Representatives Kessler, Warnick, Haler, Kretz, Hinkle, Orcutt, Newhouse, Lantz, McCune, Kristiansen, Haigh, B. Sullivan and Dunn.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/19/07, 2/22/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requests the United States Congress and the President of the United States to enact a law preserving the access of pack and saddle stock animals on public lands where there is a historical tradition of access.
- Requests the United States Congress and the President of the United States to enact a law allowing federal agencies to implement proposed reductions in the access of pack and saddle stock animals only after complying with the full review process.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt, Strow and VanDeWege.

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

Background:

Right-to-Ride bills have been introduced in the United States Congress several times, but have never successfully passed both houses. The Right-to-Ride bills have sought to preserve the

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use and access of pack and saddle stock animals on land administered by the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service where there was a historical tradition of the use of pack and saddle stock animals.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The United States Congress and the President of the United States should enact a law preserving the access of pack and saddle stock animals on public lands where there is a historical tradition of access. In addition, federal agencies should comply with the full review process before implementing proposed reductions in the access of pack and saddle stock animals.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

This bill omits language pertaining to the violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Backcountry Horsemen and owners of pack and saddle stock animals voluntarily maintain and help build trails. Pack and saddle stock animals are important to the economy and the sustainability of the public lands. The majority of backpackers and hikers support pack and saddle stock animals sharing the public lands. Overall, pack and saddle stock animals do not cause much impact on the trails. Trails need to be maintained for recreational use, but if access is denied to the pack and saddle stock animal owners, the owners will be less likely to volunteer their hours to help maintain the trails.

(Neutral) Backcountry Horsemen volunteers make trail maintenance possible because of their ability to bring in different tools to help maintain the trails. However, the language in some of the past Right-to-Ride bills has not been adequate.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Warnick; Michael J. Reedy, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington and Back Country Horsemen of America; Darrell Wallace and Robert Brooke, Backcountry Horsemen of Washington; Jim Sizemore and Daryl Asmussen, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Frank Wesselias, Back Country Horsemen of Yakima; and Dal E. Daghon, Okanogan County Cattlemen's Association.

(Neutral) Jonathan Guzzo, Washington Trails Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.