

Regular Session, 2004

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 356

BY REPRESENTATIVE TRICHE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To express legislative support for federal management of wild horses on federal lands.

WHEREAS, the Wild and Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, which the United States Congress enacted to protect wild horses, defines "wild, free-roaming horses and burros" to be "*all unbranded and unclaimed horses and burros on public lands of the United States*"; and

WHEREAS, there are hundreds of such unclaimed and unbranded horses living in free-roaming bands on the public lands of the Kisatchie National Forest and the lands of the Fort Polk Military Reservation, which horses, in most cases, were not only born on those lands, but are the progeny of generations of such horses, according to residents of the area; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army has effectively managed these wild animals for decades and has and should retain the authority to continue to do so in a manner that is best for the well-being of the animals; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Army is currently conducting an environmental assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act to determine what, if anything, it needs to do regarding the wild horses that roam freely on the lands in Kisatchie National Forest used by the Army as training areas; and

WHEREAS, the wild horses that roam freely upon Army training ranges actually enhance certain exercises, adding an additional element of realism to real-world simulations which are part of the Army's training regimen, and because of this, Fort Polk Commanding General Samuel S. Thompson wrote in May, 1999: "I don't want to lose those herds"; and

WHEREAS, the Army has access to the best information on equine health through the United States Department of Agriculture and is in the best position to decide whether or

not it is necessary to remove the wild horses, and in this era of terrorism, should not be unnecessarily distracted from its primary mission because of equine health regulations that are unsupported by science; and

WHEREAS, the general public exhibits a special affinity for horses, especially wild horses, believes they should be protected, and is appalled when horses are abused or killed unnecessarily.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby recognize that free-roaming, unbranded, and unclaimed horses, often referred to as wild or "trespass" horses, on federal lands within the state of Louisiana are property of the people of the United States and should be managed in accordance with accepted practices established by federal agencies having jurisdiction over the lands, which practices have effectively protected the welfare of these horses for decades and pose no threat to the health of any owned horse.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express its intent that regulatory authority it has granted with respect to horses does not extend to wild horses on federal lands within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army or the United States Forest Service and that the welfare of such horses should be entrusted to the expertise of those agencies with counsel from the United States Department of Agriculture.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the U.S. Army commanding general of Fort Polk and the United States Forest Service office in Alexandria.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE