DRAFT ONLY
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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO.

Horse management methods.

Sponsored by: Representative(s) Wharff

A JOINT RESOLUTION

for

A JOINT RESOLUTION requesting Congress to enact legislation to amend the federal Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act to remove the restrictions on and authorize additional methods for the management and disposition of wild horses and burros, to amend federal funding restrictions to allow for the destruction of healthy, unadopted wild horses and burros, to amend the federal Hunting Wild Horses and Burros on Public Lands Act to authorize the use of helicopters or motor vehicles to capture wild horses and burros, to restore federal funding for inspectors of horses for slaughter and in the alternative to amend the federal Meat Inspection Act to allow states to fund their own inspectors for the purposes of inspecting horse meat.

WHEREAS, the federal Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (the Act), as amended, protects wild horses and burros from harassment or death and declares that wild free-roaming horses and burros are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West; and

WHEREAS, the Act directs the secretary of the United States department of interior through the bureau of land management (BLM) to manage wild horses and burros within the areas where these animals were found roaming in 1971; and

WHEREAS, under the Act, the BLM must inventory wild horse and burro populations periodically to determine appropriate management levels (AMLs). An AML is the population range at which wild horse and burro populations are consistent with the land's capacity to support them and other mandated uses of those lands; and

WHEREAS, under the Act, the BLM is authorized to remove wild horses and burros to achieve AMLs upon the respective agency's determination that an overpopulation exists. When necessary to achieve AMLs for herds of wild horses and burros, the BLM

relies on a combination of management tools including fertility control and removal of excess horses; and

WHEREAS, under the Act, the BLM is authorized to remove wild horses and burros through adoption, sale, transfer or otherwise dispose of wild horses and burros pursuant to law; and

WHEREAS, the Act prohibits the malicious or negligent injuring, harassing or causing the death of a wild horse or burro and the destroying of a wild horse or burro without authorization except in the case of humane destruction; and

WHEREAS, the Act also prohibits the direct and indirect selling or attempted selling of a wild horse or burro or the horse's or burro's remains, and the processing or permitting the processing of the remains of a wild horse or burro into commercial products; and

WHEREAS, Congress has prohibited the United States department of interior from expending funds for the "destruction of healthy, unadopted, wild horses and burros in the care of the [BLM] or its contractors or for the sale of wild horses and

burros that results in their destruction for processing into commercial products" in the United States department of interior's appropriation acts from 1988 to 2004 then again from 2010 to present; and

WHEREAS, the state of Wyoming is faced with an overpopulation of wild horses; and

WHEREAS, as of March 1, 2026, there are an estimated seven thousand one hundred sixty-five (7,165) wild horses and zero (0) burros in the state of Wyoming; and

WHEREAS, the maximum AML for Wyoming's herd management areas is two thousand five hundred sixty-six (2,566) wild horses and burros; and

WHEREAS, the wild horse and burro population currently exceeds the AML by at least five thousand (5,000) wild horses and burros; and

WHEREAS, with virtually no natural predators, wild horse and burro populations can double every four (4) to five (5) years if left unchecked; and

WHEREAS, responsible management of wild horse and burro populations is vital to protect scarce and fragile resources in the arid West and ensure healthy wildlife and livestock; and

WHEREAS, for example, the presence of wild horses and burros at water sources deters keystone species such as pronghorn antelope from accessing critical water in the species' natural ranges, thus further stressing these important species; and

WHEREAS, without responsible management, the resources in the arid West cannot be managed for multiple-use because wild horses unduly infringe upon other uses by damaging riverbeds and overgrazing on limited forage, while using and often damaging the infrastructure of other public land users and private landowners; and

WHEREAS, the federal Hunting Wild Horses and Burros on Public Land Act prohibits any person from using an aircraft or motor vehicle to hunt, for the purpose of capturing or killing, any

wild horses or burros running at large on any public lands or ranges; and

WHEREAS, the BLM and the United States forest service are exempted from this prohibition and frequently utilize helicopters to herd or chase wild horses or burros for capture under the federal Hunting Wild Horses and Burros on Public Lands Act to great success; and

WHEREAS, the federal Meat Inspection Act authorizes the secretary of the United States department of agriculture to appoint inspectors to examine and inspect certain species before the animal enters into any slaughtering establishment to be slaughtered for use as meat or in meat food products; and

WHEREAS, without inspection by these appointed inspectors, slaughtering establishments are prohibited from operating in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Congress has not provided federal funding for inspectors of horses for slaughter under the federal Meat Inspection Act from 2005 to 2012 then 2014 to present in

appropriations bills for the United States department of agriculture, thus making the slaughter of horses in a slaughter establishment essentially impossible; and

WHEREAS, horse abandonment resulting from financial hardship or the inability to care for aged or ill horses contributes to challenges similar to those associated with the overpopulation of wild horses; and

WHEREAS, the overabundance of wild horses and burros and abandoned horses have outpaced current methods of management permitted under law; and

WHEREAS, the state of Wyoming needs additional tools to manage these wild horses and burros and abandoned horses, including the authority to utilize slaughter as a management option and to inspect horse meat within the state without federal restrictions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WYOMING:

Section 1.

(a) That the Wyoming Legislature requests that Congress introduce and enact legislation:

(i) To amend the federal Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act to remove the restrictions on the management and disposition of wild horses and burros and to authorize additional methods for the management and disposition of those animals; and

(ii) To amend federal funding restrictions to allow for the destruction of healthy, unadopted wild horses and burros by the BLM, either directly or through sale to processors, that will result in the destruction of those animals.

Section 2. That the Wyoming Legislature requests that Congress introduce and enact legislation to amend the federal Hunting Wild Horses and Burros on Public Lands Act to authorize any person to use helicopters or motor vehicles to capture or kill wild horses and burros.

Section 3.

(a) That the Wyoming Legislature requests that Congress introduce and enact legislation:

(i) To restore federal funding for the salaries and expenses of personnel to inspect horses under section 3 of the federal Meat Inspection Act and the guidelines issued under section 903 of the federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996; or

(ii) To amend the federal Meat Inspection Act to authorize states to fund inspectors for the purpose of inspecting horse meat.

Section 4. That the Secretary of State of Wyoming transmit copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress and to the Wyoming Congressional Delegation.

(END)