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## State Sen. Dan Hall introduces bill to name Dan Patch official horse of Minnesota

- [By Christine Schuster | cschuster@swpub.com](#) Mar 15, 2018

Could Dan Patch be recognized as the official state horse of Minnesota?

Maybe.

On March 8, State Sen. Dan Hall, R-Burnsville, introduced a bill to honor racehorse Dan Patch.

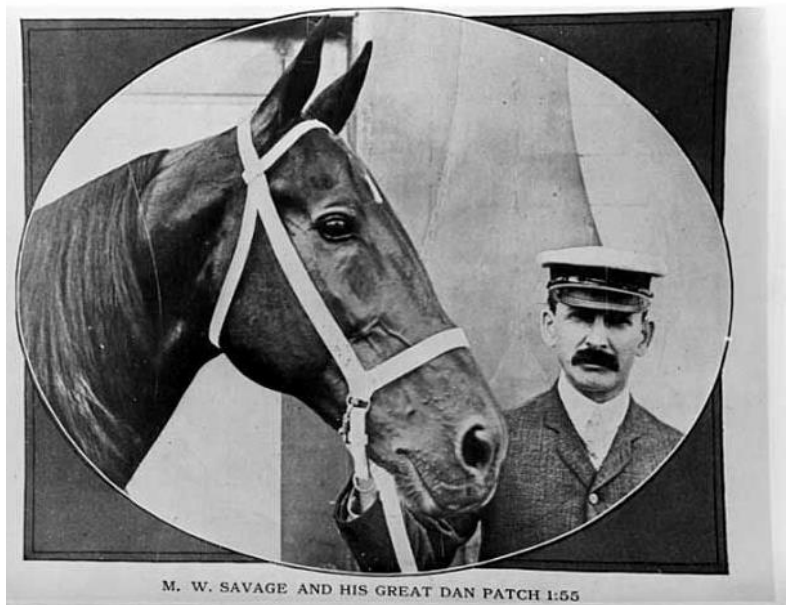
“Tell me the name of a greater horse, or any horse, that represents Minnesota better than Dan Patch,” Hall said. “There isn’t one.”

Born in 1896, and purchased by Marion W. Savage of Minneapolis in 1902, Dan Patch set the world record for harness racing with a 1 minute, 55 second mile at the Minnesota State Fair racetrack in 1906. Harness racing was one of the most popular sports in the country and Dan Patch was a regular celebrity, generating over \$1 million in earnings and exhibitions.

As a young horse, Dan Patch was noticed for his friendly personality, but had knee issues that many believed would prevent him from becoming a successful pacer.

“They thought he had no potential but there was somebody that believed in him,” Hall said. “I think that speaks to a lot of us. It takes somebody in our life to believe in us.”

Hall said that Dan Patch’s life inspires him in many ways. At his prime, Dan Patch was



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older than most horses he raced against.

“The elderly in our community are not over the hill, like so many people say,” Halls said. “The elderly people should be listened to, respected and expected that they still have a lot left in them.”

Inspired by the story, Hall said he began asking Minnesotans if they knew of a horse that represented Minnesota. He said this question usually stumps people until he asks if they’ve heard of Dan Patch.

“They go, ‘Oh, yes! Dan Patch.’ It’s on of those things where people know, but they just don’t hear enough of it. When they hear the story of Dan Patch they are all inspired,” Hall said.

The state currently has 18 state symbols in law, including milk as the state beverage, morel as the state mushroom and Honeycrisp apples as the state fruit. Hall said that it would be unusual to designate a specific horse as a state symbol, rather than a type of horse. However, he finds that the official state song, “Hail! Minnesota,” signed into law in 1945, sets precedence that a state symbol can be specific.

“In my opinion, Dan Patch is Minnesota,” he said.



A decision on the bill depends on when it will be heard by a committee. The deadline to be heard by a committee for this session is March 23 and a hearing is not currently scheduled. There is a possibility that it could be added to another bill.

“History and heritage are two different things,” Sen. Hall said. “There are things in life and history that need to become a part of our heritage. Especially those things that inspire us and make us dream and reach out further. That’s what I think symbols like Dan Patch do.”