

U.S. House Passes Appropriations Package Cracking Down on Animal Cruelty, Trophy Hunting of Threatened Species

House approves Interior and Agriculture spending bills free of anti-animal riders, bars horse slaughter plants from operating, directs USDA to restore database

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, June 25, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The passage of a multi-agency spending bill that includes funding for the Agriculture, Interior, and Justice departments improved substantially after lawmakers passed three pro-animal amendments on the floor that upgrade enforcement of anti-cruelty laws and strengthen protections for foreign-listed species under the Endangered Species Act. Those provisions strengthened an already strong bill that came out of their committees with a number of other pro-animal provisions.



Cecil the lion killed in Zimbabwe by American dentist

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Without enforcement, our laws are nothing but words.”
Holly Gann, director of federal affairs at Animal Wellness Action

“Congress has made great strides to improve our animal welfare laws and rid this country of heartless cruelty toward animals, yet there are currently insufficient resources to ensure that these laws are adequately enforced,” said Congresswoman Haley Stevens, who led the fight to pass an amendment on the CJS spending bill to upgrade anti-cruelty enforcement.

Her amendment, which passed by a vote of 381-50, instructs the Department of Justice to use \$2 million from the Legal Activities account to enforce animal welfare crimes, and was cosponsored by Matt Gaetz (R-FL), Joe Neguse (D-CO), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Ben McAdams (D-UT), Peter King (R-NY), Madeleine Dean (D-PA), Vern Buchanan (R-FL), and Cindy Axne (D-IA). The DOJ and USDA are obligated to enforce federal anti-cruelty laws – including the federal animal fighting laws, the Horse Protection Act, the Crush Video law, and the Animal Welfare Act-- and a lack of vigorous enforcement puts vulnerable animals and communities at risk.

A separate amendment, which passed by a voice vote on the Agriculture spending bill, provides \$1 million for the enforcement of the animal fighting law through the USDA's Office of Inspector General. “I was honored to lead this bipartisan, commonsense amendment to secure funds for USDA investigations of animal fighting,” said Congressman Joe Neguse, who offered the amendment. “Enforcement by USDA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG), which is responsible for investigating these crimes, has badly lagged.”

That amendment was cosponsored by Peter King (R-NY), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Roger Marshall (R-KS), Ben McAdams (D-UT), Madeleine Dean (D-PA), Steve Cohen (D-TN), and Ron Estes (R-KS). The Congress has upgraded the federal law against animal fighting (7 U.S.C. § 2156 and 18 U.S.C. § 49) five times in the last two decades, and this amendment signals to USDA that it should aggressively crack down on dogfighting and cockfighting, including in the U.S. territories.

A third amendment, led by Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and backed by Jared Huffman (D-CA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), and Ted Lieu (D-CA), bars Interior Department funding for imports of sport-hunted elephant and lion trophies from Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. "These magnificent creatures are on the verge of extinction," said Congressman Vern Buchanan, whose amendment passed by a vote of 239 – 193. "The last thing we should be doing is making it easy to slaughter these animals and bring their stuffed heads back into the U.S. as "trophies. Once a species is extinct it's gone forever."

"Without enforcement, our laws are nothing but words," said Holly Gann, director of federal affairs at Animal Wellness Foundation. "The United States Department of Agriculture must vigorously enforce the animal fighting law, and we encourage the Department of Justice to establish an [Animal Cruelty](#) Crimes unit with personnel focused solely on these issues to allow for efficient and effective enforcement."

AWA also applauded a provision, included by the Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee, to restore a searchable database that include Animal Welfare Act inspection reports and Horse Protection Act violation notices.

Unlike prior Interior spending bills, there are no anti-environmental riders related to wolves or predator killing in Alaska. The agriculture bill contains a number of other pro-animal provisions, including a ban on USDA spending to inspect any U.S.-based [horse slaughter](#) plants. There is some confusing language on the management of wild horses, and Animal Wellness will be closely examining that issue as the focus on these spending measures turns to the Senate. The passage of the pro-animal floor amendments comes on the heels of the announcement made earlier this week by Animal Wellness Action and the Animal Wellness Foundation regarding the establishment of the Animal Wellness National [Law Enforcement](#) Council (NLEC) co-chaired by former Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson, and former Oregon District Attorney Josh Marquis.



Cockfighting Match



Cockfighting Ring

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

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