

# Merkley and Collins' RAWR Act to Crackdown on Wildlife Trafficking and Terrorist Regimes Passes U.S. Senate

*Anti-wildlife trafficking is first animal protection bill to be passed through the House and Senate in 2019*

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, October 24, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This week, the United States Senate passed the [Rescuing Animals With Rewards \(RAWR\) Act](#), S. 1590, introduced by U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Susan Collins (R-ME). It's first stand-alone animal protection measure to pass both the House and the Senate in the 116th Congress. The House companion bill, [H.R. 97](#), passed in July. The bill must go back to the House one more time for final approval.

The legislation would amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 to authorize rewards for thwarting wildlife trafficking linked to terrorism and organized crime.

Wildlife trafficking is a major transnational crime that is estimated to generate over \$10 billion a year in illegal profits, and the drivers of the enterprise are often organized, sophisticated criminal enterprises, including known terrorist organizations. Wildlife trafficking not only threatens endangered species worldwide, but also jeopardizes local security, spreads disease, undermines rule of law, fuels corruption, and damages economic development.

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*Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action*



Ivory from Elephant Tusks is Commonly Trafficked

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“Wildlife crimes undermine national security and cause immense cruelty to animals,” said Marty Irby, executive director at Animal Wellness Action. “We applaud the Congress for offering a creative way to crack down on these international crimes and call on the House to take action now, and for President Trump to swiftly ink the RAWR Act into law.”

“When wildlife traffickers, poachers, and profiteers kill magnificent animals like elephants, giraffes, and rhinos,

they risk causing irreparable destruction to critical ecosystems and rob the world of a piece of our humanity and shared history on this planet," said U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR). "This week, the Senate took an important step toward righting this wrong, and now I'm urging my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to pass this bill without delay."

"Wildlife trafficking is a transnational crime that requires a coordinated and sustained global effort to effectively combat it," said U.S. Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME). "The bipartisan RAWR Act will allow the State Department to offer rewards for information regarding wildlife traffickers, building upon ongoing efforts to deter this illegal activity that harms animals and threatens conservation efforts."

The passage of the RAWR Act comes on the heels of a recent House appropriations amendment championed by Animal Wellness Action and the Animal Wellness Foundation that passed by a vote of 239 to 192 to bar imports of sport-hunted trophies from elephants and lions, both listed as threatened or endangered across their range. Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL) led that amendment and Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV), the lead sponsor of the House passed RAWR Act, supported it.

Animal Wellness also supports other legislative initiatives to stop the trade in animal parts, including the Shark Fin Trade Elimination Act and the Bear Protection Act, which seeks to stop the killing of bears for their gall bladders.

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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