

Neguse, Gaetz, Cohen, and Carter Introduce Bill to Crack Down on Animal Cruelty

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, August 14, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a major new federal legislative initiative, U.S. Reps. Joe Neguse, D-Colo., Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., and Buddy Carter, R-Ga., introduced the Animal Cruelty Enforcement (ACE) Act, a bill they forged in cooperation with Animal Wellness Action and the Animal Wellness Foundation to step up federal action against perpetrators of malicious cruelty. The measure would create a new Animal Cruelty Crimes section within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), housed within the Environment and Natural Resources Division.



Animal Cruelty Enforcement (ACE) Act | Photo by Craig Swanson Design

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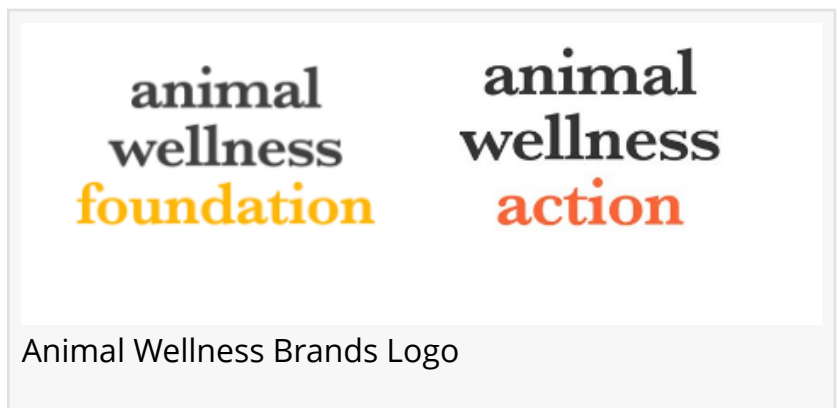
Holly Gann, director of federal affairs at Animal Wellness Action

Within the last two years, Congress and the President have fortified the legal framework against animal abuse, enacting the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act, the Parity in Animal Cruelty Enforcement (PACE) Act, Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act, the Dog and Cat Meat Trade Prohibition Act, and other federal statutes criminalizing malicious acts of cruelty. The new DOJ section would concentrate on enforcing those laws and other previously enacted animal welfare criminal statutes.

“If there is one thing all Americans agree on, it’s that strong

enforcement is needed to address heinous acts of cruelty like animal fighting where spectators bet on animals that are forced to fight to their deaths, and crush videos where innocent animals are tortured for fetishes,” said Holly Gann, director of federal affairs at Animal Wellness Action and the Animal Wellness Foundation. “Congress has passed a number of laws to protect animals from cruelty, but these laws are only effective if enforced.”

“Proper enforcement of animal cruelty laws will protect animal welfare and help keep each of our communities safe from the violence often linked to these crimes,” said Rep. Neguse. “For too long the Department of Justice has missed the mark on providing timely and efficient prosecutions. The Animal Cruelty Enforcement Act, which I am proud to introduce today, seeks to right this by providing the necessary resources and staffing for efficient enforcement of these laws, so animals and communities alike are protected and justice is served.”



“I am proud to join Mr. Neguse and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to introduce the ACE Act, an important step forward in the fight against animal cruelty,” said Rep. Gaetz. “This bipartisan, bicameral bill will help protect animals and bring bad actors to justice nationwide, and I look forward to its swift passage.”

“I’m proud to support the Animal Cruelty Enforcement Act. Intentionally inflicting harm to defenseless animals, including through competitive dog fighting and other inhumane practices, has no place in civilized society,” said Rep. Cohen. “Enforcement of measures already on the books is critical to ending these barbaric practices, which is what this measure aims to do.”

“Congress has made important strides to prevent animal cruelty recently,” said Rep. Carter. “Now, we need to ensure the laws are enforced. This legislation will provide the resources necessary to combat animal-fighting and other barbaric practices. I thank my colleagues for the bipartisan work on this bill.”

The introduction of the authorizing bill comes on the heels of a successful effort in the House to use \$1 million from the Legal Activities account to enforce animal welfare laws, and was sponsored by Reps. Neguse, Gaetz, Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Penn., Ben McAdams, D-Utah, Bill Posey, R-Fla., Cohen, Tony Cardenas, D-Calif., Jamie Raskin, D-Md., John Katko, R-N.Y., Dina Titus, D-Nev., Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-D.C., and Kurt Schrader, D-Oregon. Language was also included by the House Appropriations Committee directing DOJ to make enforcement of animal cruelty laws a priority and encouraging the DOJ to establish a dedicated section to handle animal cruelty crimes.

A dedicated Animal Cruelty Crimes section at DOJ would allow for robust and effective enforcement of these crimes by designating personnel focused on these issues. DOJ already has dedicated sections on other important societal concerns, such as environmental protection, wildlife, and organized crime.

The passage of this amendment comes after a series of cockfighting investigations in [Oklahoma](#),

[Alabama](#), [Tennessee](#), Guam, and Kentucky exposing massive illegal enterprises involved in global shipping of animals for fighting purposes, in violation of federal laws against that activity.

“Our nation has an epidemic of rampant dogfighting and cockfighting, bestiality, the sale of animal crush videos, horse soring, and other forms of extreme exploitation,” noted Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action. “A new Animal Cruelty Crimes section would allow the United States to do more to combat cruelty and complement efforts of the states and local governments in sending a signal that malicious mistreatment of animals won’t be tolerated in our nation.”

The measure is supported by Animal Wellness Action and the Animal Wellness Foundation’s Animal Wellness National Law Enforcement Council (NLEC) co-chaired by former Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson, and former Oregon District Attorney Josh Marquis; SPCA International; the Center for a Humane Economy; Horses for Life Foundation; and American Horse Protection Society.

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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