

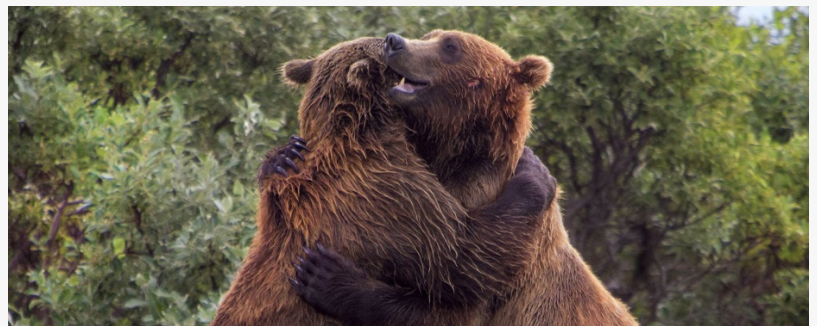
Animal Wellness Action Says the Global Trade in Bear Parts Must End

Group Applauds Reps. Lieu, Davis, Kuster, Glenn Thompson and Mike Thompson for Introducing the Bear Protection Act

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, April 2, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ --

Today, [Animal Wellness Action](#) applauded lawmakers for introducing legislation to stop the exploitation of bears, seeking to end the killing of the animals for their bile and gall bladders.

Representatives Ted Lieu, D-Calif.; Rodney Davis, R-Ill., Ann Kuster, D-N.H., Glenn Thompson, R-Penn., and Mike Thompson, D-Calif., introduced the Bear Protection Act, H.R. 2325, to crack down on the global trafficking of bear parts, months after China's Ministry of Health announced that it considered bear bile an effective palliative treatment for patients suffering from COVID-19.



Bear Protection Act

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Wayne Pacelle

Bear bile is obtained for use mainly in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and it is sourced from bear “farms” in China and Vietnam -- where the animals are housed in concrete pits and “milked” for the bodily fluid – and by killing bears from the wild. There are eight species of bears in the world, most of them threatened or endangered, and once gall bladders are extracted from the body of a bear, they are visually indistinguishable in terms of species type.

The Bear Protection Act would forbid any interstate

transport or sales of bear galls and other viscera and forbid any imports or exports of these body parts. It does not restrict legal hunting of bears or use of their parts for trophies.

“We shouldn't be killing rhinos for their horns, elephants for their tusks, or bears for their gall bladders,” said Wayne Pacelle, founder of Animal Wellness Action. “With China's Ministry of Health announcing that bear bile is an acceptable treatment for COVID-19 patients, we are one major outbreak away from a spike in demand from bile from bears. Cruelty and killing would be

the downstream effects should that scenario play out.”

“As a proud member of the Animal Protection Caucus, I am horrified that bears in the United States are being poached for their internal organs,” said Rep. Ann Kuster (NH-02). “The demand for these organs has already devastated bear populations in Asia, and we must protect our iconic bear populations in the United States from illegal poaching. I am pleased to join my colleagues to re-introduce this legislation that will proactively protect our bears by banning the trade and transport of these bear organs.”

“As an avid sportsman and conservationist, I am shocked by the harvesting gallbladders from bears. This is inhumane and we must end the illicit trade of bear organs,” said Rep. Glenn “GT” Thompson (PA-15). “Bears are magnificent creatures --- even when they invade our backyard apiary in rural Pennsylvania – and we must ensure the longevity of the species by protecting them from this senseless practice,” added Thompson.

“This legislation will proactively help protect dwindling bear population in our country and ensure they are around for future generations,” said Rep. Rodney Davis (IL-13). “I am proud to join my colleagues to bring an end to the inhumane practice of poaching and selling bear parts.”

Across the United States, bears and cubs are killed by poachers who take only their gallbladders, and sometimes their paws, leaving the rest of the bear behind. The gallbladders are easy to conceal and fetch a high price (exceeding \$1,000 per gallbladder) due to their use in some traditional Chinese medicine.

The trade is heavily centralized in China and South Korea, where bears are farmed for their bile in what amounts to a horror show – bears are kept in small cages for years with a tube inserted directly into their gallbladder to obtain bile, often until the bear dies from the effects of this invasive and dangerous process. Asian Bear populations in the wild are imperiled, while other species of bears throughout the world face threats from the trade in their parts and the effects of other human activities.

There are 40 states have laws on the books to address this trade, revealing the emerging consensus to address this problem. The Bear Protection Act is needed to make a global statement about the trade from the United States and to address gaps or inconsistencies in state laws. A trafficker in Colorado may face up to three years in prison and a \$100,000 fine, while a trafficker in Kentucky may receive only a \$100 fine. Federal sentencing guidelines dictate that the market value of the item must be at least \$350 for a prosecution under the federal Lacey Act, but the courts attribute the value of a gallbladder to only \$280.

These House lawmakers introduced this same legislation last year, and also in 2020, Senators John Kennedy, R-La., and Cory Booker, D-N.J., introduced a companion bill. A Senate bill is forthcoming.

It's not a new issue in the Congress. In past years, Rep. Raul Grijalva, now the chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, introduced similar legislation several years ago, as did U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell. McConnell's bill passed the Senate twice, but it was not acted upon by the House.

The bill has a broad range of endorsing organization, including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

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.

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.

The Center for a Humane Economy ("the Center") is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

Marty Irby
Animal Wellness Action
+17024199410 ext.

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