

Animal Wellness Action, Center for a Humane Economy Condemn Pro-Cockfighting Measure Headed to OK House

Groups charge that the bill gives comfort to known criminals in the state

WASHINGTON D.C., WASHINGTON D.C., UNITED STATES, February 15, 2022

/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Animal Wellness Action](#), the Animal Wellness

Foundation, the Center for a Humane Economy, and other anti-cruelty organizations condemned a bill to

weaken penalties for certain cockfighting crimes and to decriminalize others. The bill, H.B. 3283

is authored by Rep. Justin Humphrey, who represents a state legislative district where Animal Wellness Action uncovered illegal

cockfighting pits that attracted animal fighters from multiple states. AWA alerted local officials after it obtained fight schedules in 2021, but no local authorities acted on the credible and specific information provided.



Cockfighting is a brutal bloodsport, resulting in horrific fates for the birds forced into combat.

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Animal Wellness Action released [an investigation](#) in 2020 that identified Oklahoma as the “cockfighting capital of the United States,” with an array of cockfighters raising thousands of birds for fighting pits in the state and across the world. An analysis of live-animal shipping records obtained from the Guam Department of Agriculture revealed that Oklahoma cockfighters shipped nearly 5,000 fighting birds to Guam over the last five years, more than doubling the number from illegal cockfighters in any other state. Thousands of other birds go to Mexico, the

Philippines, and some 20 other countries around the world, with the perpetrators circumventing tax laws and defying state and federal anti-cruelty laws.

In a letter to House lawmakers, Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action, called cockfighting “a legally and morally settled matter in Oklahoma,” with voters approving a citizen initiative and lawmakers turning back every subsequent effort to roll back some or all of its provisions. The 2002 measure was supported by then Governor Frank Keating, U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe, Attorney General Drew Edmondson, and Congressman Tom Cole.

“This pro-cockfighting bill is an affront to every law-abiding Oklahoman and an embarrassment to our state,” said Drew Edmondson, the former four-term Oklahoma Attorney General, originally from Muskogee. “Cockfighting is barbaric practice criminalized on every inch of soil by state and federal laws. The criminals who stage and promote knife fights between animals deserve handcuffs and jail time, not defensive maneuvers by lawmakers.”

An Animal Wellness Action investigation has unearthed dozens of major cockfighting operators in the state. The organization has obtained images of cockfighting farms, marketing videos by cockfighters, fight schedules, and an array of other materials incontrovertibly establishing an underground network with certain local officials clearly looking the other way. Animal Wellness Action has built dossiers nearly 20 major cockfighting operators, including John Bottoms of LeFlore County and Bill McNatt of xxxx, who were the top two shippers of fighting birds to Guam. Bottoms and his wife shipped 2197 animals to Guam and McNatt moved 1945, according to live-animal shipping records reviewed by AWA. B.L. Cozad of Comanche County appeared on HBO Sports and dared federal and state authorities to arrest him, openly admitting on national television that he engages in cockfighting activities and falsely claiming he has a constitutional right to engage in the activities.

“Let’s remember, there are no agriculture, veterinary, or law enforcement groups that support staged fights between animals,” added Pacelle. “The first state to outlaw cockfighting did so 190 years ago, and it’s shameful that this matter is set for debate on the floor of the Oklahoma Legislature in 2022.”

Oklahoma law makes it a crime. Federal law makes it a crime.

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