

Big Cat Public Safety Act Clears Key House Committee, Setting Up Floor Vote and Expected Landslide Passage of Measure

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, USA, June 15, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Despite pointless obstructionism today by some committee Republicans, the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, chaired by Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz., passed the Big Cat Public Safety Act, H.R. 263, by a vote of 25 -17. The bill is cosponsored by 52 House Republicans and has the backing of the national law enforcement community, the mainstream zoo community, and vast numbers of animal welfare and conservation groups.



A big cat in captivity.

The measure, led by Reps. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., and Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., passed the House in the previous Congress by a vote of 272 to 114. The bill had been introduced long before the salacious reality television series “Tiger King” but that series put the issue of private ownership of tigers and lions on the American radar screen. NBC’s streaming platform, Peacock TV, also featured the bill in its series “Joe vs. Carole” released in March.

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Congress should step up and support those of us in law enforcement, who risk our lives every day, and pass the Big Cat Public Safety Act.”

Sheriff Matt Lutz, Zanesville, Ohio

The legislation seeks to ban the trade in big cats as pets and to halt exploitation of the animals for cub-petting at roadside zoos – two forms of commerce responsible for

the import and breeding of non-domesticated cats. These cats are imperiled when they become too big and dangerous to handle, with many ending up at refugees at great cost to the charities who operate them. If these animals escape—and some invariably do—they pose a significant threat to the public and first responders.

“Big cats are amazing but best experienced at a distance in the wild or through a physical barrier at an accredited zoo or reputable sanctuary,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of the Center for a Humane Economy. “Breeding them for the pet trade or for cub-petting is a hazard for people and the animals.”

“There’s no legislation we’ve worked harder to pass in the 117th Congress than the Big Cat Public Safety Act, and we applaud Chairman Grijalva for advancing this widely supported measure with more than 250 bipartisan cosponsors in the chamber closest to the American people,” said Marty Irby executive director at Animal Wellness Action. “Breeders who pump out countless big cats for cub-petting are worse than puppy millers, placing unfunded mandates on animal rescues who have to clean up their mess and care for these majestic creatures once they’ve grown too big to exploit.”

“I’ve experienced the worst-case scenario first-hand, and it is a gut-wrenching experience to think about tigers, lions, and other big cats on the prowl in such close proximity to our homes and our schools,” said Sheriff Matt Lutz from Zanesville, Ohio, whose office was forced to respond to mass release of tigers, lions, and other animals in his community more than a decade ago. “Congress should step up and support those of us in law enforcement, who risk our lives every day, and pass the Big Cat Public Safety Act.”

In many cases, when big cats are discarded by roadside zoos, it is a network of animal sanctuaries that are asked to house the animals for the remainder of their lives, and it is an enormous expense.



Left to right: Carole Baskin, U.S. Rep. Dan Crenshaw, and Marty Irby



Left to right: Carole Baskin, U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C., and Marty Irby

Captive big cats are not animals that first responders are trained to handle.

Down from nearly 60 cub-petting operations just 10 or 15 years ago, there are now maybe two or three commercial cub petting outfits in the U.S. Nearly all cub petters featured in “Tiger King” are incarcerated, have had their animals seized, or are facing prosecution.

-Joe Exotic, as everyone knows, is serving 21 years in federal prison for 17 wildlife related charges as well as murder for hire charges.

-Jeff Lowe, who took charge of Joe Exotic’s GW Zoo and intended to open a cub petting operation in far eastern Oklahoma, had his operation raided by federal authorities, who brought civil charges against him. Jeff Lowe’s animals have been confiscated and placed at sanctuaries. There are warrants out for Lowe’s arrest in Las Vegas, and he has recently been found in contempt of court and fined \$96,000 by a federal judge in Oklahoma.

-Tim Stark, another prominent Tiger King “star,” had his animals confiscated by the State of Indiana for multiple animal related and nonprofit operation violations. He fled the State after a criminal charge was filed and was arrested in New York.

-Bhagavan Antle was arrested by the on charges of money laundering. He’s also facing charges by the State of Virginia with 15 counts of wildlife trafficking and animal cruelty.

In 2003, Congress unanimously enacted the Captive Wildlife Safety Act to ban the trade in big cats as pets, and President George W. Bush signed it into law. The measure had a drafting error, and the Big Cat Public Safety Act seeks to correct that problem and to ban breeding big cats for cub petting.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission



Big cats are majestic but live miserably as pets and are potentially lethal to people when they escape.

**animal
wellness
action**

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 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.

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.

Marty Irby

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