

U.S. Senate Passes Big Cat Public Safety Act to Prevent Another Zanesville Massacre, Bill Heads to Biden for Signing

Legislation Now Heads to President Biden's Desk to be Signed into Law

ZANESVILLE, OHIO, UNITED STATES , December 7, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, Animal Wellness Action, the Animal Wellness Foundation, the Center for a Humane Economy, and Big Cat Rescue announced the U.S. Senate passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act, H.R. 263, last night by Unanimous Consent, completing Congressional work on the subject four months after the House passed the measure. The measure next heads to the President's desk to be inked into law – a likely outcome given that [White House](#) has already provided public support for the bill.



A win in the House means cruel cub-petting zoos and private-ownership of big cats come closer to extinction.

The groups commend Sens. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Reps. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., and Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., for introducing the legislation in the 117th Congress, and Sens. Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown who as well as Reps. Troy Balderson, Joyce Beatty, Shontel Brown, Mike Carey, Steve Chabot, Bill Johnson, Dave Joyce, Marcy Kaptur, Tim Ryan, and Michael Turner who all voted in support of the measure when it passed the U.S. House in July.

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Sheriff Matt Lutz

Some years ago, a disturbed animal owner released dozens of large powerful animals into the community in Zanesville, Ohio, and Sheriff Matt Lutz was forced to respond to protect the community. Lutz has subsequently

lobbied on Capitol Hill on numerous occasions to advance the legislation, most recently [with Animal Wellness Action earlier this year](#). Animal Wellness Action has also hosted Carole Baskin on Capitol Hill and lobbied with her to pass the legislation on numerous occasions including last Summer, December of 2021, and both January and March of this year.

"I'm elated to see the U.S. Congress step up to help those of us in law enforcement prevent unnecessary risk to our lives by addressing this issue and passing the Big Cat Public Safety Act," said Sheriff Matt Lutz who led the law enforcement efforts in the tragic 2011 Zanesville event. "I applaud the Senators who backed this measure and my own Ohio Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown for cosponsoring the bill, as well as Rep. Troy Balderson for his cosponsorship and vote in support of the measure."

"We applaud Sens. Portman and Brown for helping secure the passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act, which will keep families in Ohio safe from dangerous tigers, lions, and other big cats," said [Marty Irby](#), executive director at Animal Wellness Action. "After a decade of legislative work on the bill and tremendous publicity for the issue, this legislation will help prevent another event like the Zanesville massacre from occurring in the U.S."

"For me, this fight for the big cats was never personal," said Carole Baskin, president and founder of Big Cat Rescue. "This was always about developing a national policy to shut down the trade in these animals as props in



Sheriff Matt Lutz from Zanesville, Ohio joins Marty Irby in advocating for passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act in February of 2022



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

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commercial cub handling operations and as pets in people's backyards and basements."

"The Congress recognizes that chaos and cruelty result when people breed big cats for use as pets or for commercial petting operations," said Wayne Pacelle, president of the Center for a Humane Economy. "We applaud the Senate and House for establishing a national policy to stop the trade and breeding of endangered lions and tigers as pets in homes and props at roadside zoos."

The bill builds on the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, passed unanimously in 2003, which sought to ban the trade in big cats as pets. That original measure had a drafting flaw, and the Big Cat Public Safety Act seeks to correct that problem and to ban breeding big cats for the pet trade and for commercial cub petting.

The bill had been introduced long before the salacious reality television series "Tiger King," but that blockbuster Netflix program 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.

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

- Joe Exotic 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. Lowe's animals have been confiscated and placed at sanctuaries.
- 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 "Doc" Antle was arrested on charges of money laundering. He's also facing charges by the State of Virginia with 15 counts of wildlife trafficking and animal cruelty.

The tigers and lions bred for the pet trade or roadside attractions never lead good lives. They typically live in substandard conditions, and in almost every case, their lives end tragically. We reduce these remarkable beasts to shadows of themselves in dilapidated roadside menageries or in backyards or basements. The people who acquire the animals on impulse or for profit almost always give them up because they cannot be safely managed by individuals without sufficient resources or professional staff.

The Big Cat Public Safety Act is backed by the National Sheriffs' Association, state sheriffs' associations throughout the nation, the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Animal Care and Control Association, and countless other agencies and organizations.

Animal Wellness 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 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.

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