

# Animal Wellness Action Calls on House Lawmakers to End Disgraceful Debate About Legalizing Cockfighting in Oklahoma

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[Animal Wellness Action](#) Calls on House Lawmakers to Close Out the Disgraceful Debate About Legalizing Cockfighting in Oklahoma

Recognizing that his pro-cockfighting bill had no chance to pass, Rep. J.J.

Humphrey pursued a fallback strategy

and struck the title of H.B. 2530 and brought it to the House floor in a desperate effort to keep it alive. That maneuver fell short of securing the 51 votes needed, failing by a single vote (50 – 47). Striking the title keeps the bill alive and sends it to the other chamber for consideration, but the bill, or an amended form of it, would then have to pass both chambers and then go to the governor. In short, Humphrey and his allies are trying to buy time to narrow the provisions of his pro-cockfighting bill. But lawmakers narrowly decided not to give him that chance to continue the negotiations. The issue could come up for reconsideration tomorrow.

Last week, Rep. Humphrey [filed a floor amendment](#) to HB 2530 to broadly decriminalize cockfighting and treat a small set of remaining cockfighting prohibitions as an expensive speeding ticket. That bill as amended legalizes possession of fighting birds; training birds to fight; promoting or advertising cockfighting derbies; being a spectator at a cockfight; possessing knives and gaffs used for cockfighting; and maintaining housing structures and other equipment for fighting birds. Cockfighting itself would remain illegal, along with maintaining a cockfighting pit or refereeing a fight, but the proposed measure would provide a maximum fine of \$500 and provide no jail time for offenders. Oklahoma's voter-approved anti-cockfighting law would become the second weakest state anti-cockfighting statute, after Alabama's 1896 law.



Do Oklahomans really want to tolerate more cockfighting?



Most lawmakers recognize that these pro-cockfighting bills not only undermine the vote of the people but also embarrass Oklahoma by restoring a practice synonymous with backwardness and cruelty.”

*Wayne Pacelle, president,  
Animal Wellness Action*

Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action, issued the following statement:

“Most lawmakers recognize that the pro-cockfighting bills circulating in the Legislature not only undermine the vote of the people but also embarrass Oklahoma by restoring a practice synonymous with backwardness and cruelty. Lawmakers should hold firm and close out this debate and let HB 2530 die, keeping Oklahoma’s most important anti-cruelty law fully intact.”

Animal Wellness Action has made a set of resources available to Oklahomans so they can understand that the

cockfighting community has no support outside of its ranks for this maneuver and that the leaders of this effort are breaking the laws of Oklahoma and the United States by possessing animals for fighting and engaging in an array of other prohibited activities. Oklahomans can go to this site for more information: [Cockfighting is not OK | \(animalwellnessaction.org\)](http://animalwellnessaction.org).

#### ABOUT

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.

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