

Animal Welfare Groups and Responsible Hunters Applaud the 'Don't Feed the Bears Act' to End Bear Baiting

More than 70 organizations endorse bill led by U.S. Rep. Shri Thanedar to end dangerous practice on federal lands

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, July 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Animal Wellness Action](#)

and the [Center for a Humane Economy](#) today celebrated the introduction of the “Don't Feed the Bears Act of 2025” (H.R. 4422) by U.S. Representative Shri Thanedar (D-Mich.), with original cosponsors Reps. André Carson (D-Ind.), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.) and Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.). The bill would prohibit the dangerous and unethical practice of killing bears over bait on public lands managed by federal agencies.

“

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*Wayne Pacelle, president of
the Center for a Humane
Economy*

More than 70 national and regional organizations have endorsed the legislation, which targets a reckless hunting practice: hauling in thousands of pounds of human food

waste — including donuts, cooking grease, candy, and decaying meat — to lure bears into range and to shoot them in the back with their head in a barrel of food. Multiple state and federal wildlife management agencies, wildlife biologists, and other wildlife advocates have condemned the practice for its role in degrading bear health, spreading disease, orphaning cubs, and increasing bear-human conflicts.

“Placing garbage piles in our national forests to ambush bears is not hunting. It's an unsporting and reckless practice that puts wildlife and people at risk,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy. “We thank Representative Thanedar for introducing this long-overdue reform and standing up for the principles of fair chase and sound wildlife management on our shared public lands.”

The Don't Feed the Bears Act responds to concerns voiced by federal land management agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, warning visitors to “never feed bears” because it habituates them to human food sources. Some agencies punish feeding of bears with fines and jail time, yet they do not prohibit bear baiting – contradicting

their messaging in a dramatic way.

“Hauling smelly garbage into the woods teaches otherwise wild and well-behaved bears to love human food and henceforth seek it out, creating problem bears,” said Dave Petersen, lifelong hunter and editor of the acclaimed collection *A Hunter’s Heart*. “Baiting is not hunting at all, as it requires no woodsmanship skills and no empathy for the game. Baiting is a crutch for fakers and losers. Baiting gives honorable hunting a bad name.”

Bear baiting is currently legal in 12 states, including eight where it’s allowed on federal lands, including Alaska, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. According to recent data reviewed by Animal Wellness Action, at least 16,000 bears are killed over bait each year, with more than 10,000 of those killings occurring on federal lands. Spring baiting — still legal in several states — frequently leads to the death of lactating mothers, leaving cubs orphaned and vulnerable to starvation or predation.

In July 2024, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a final rule to forbid bear baiting on 20 million acres of national preserves. “This rule will lower the probability of visitors encountering a bait station where bears may attack to defend a food source. Further, this rule will lower the risk that bears will associate food at bait stations with humans and become conditioned to eating human-produced foods, thereby creating a public safety concern,” wrote the agency in its final rule. A generation ago, voters in Colorado, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington banned bear baiting by approving citizen ballot measures.

The United States has long banned any baiting of waterfowl. And most states ban baiting of deer, elk, and moose in states where hunting of the cervids is permitted.

Writer Ted Williams – a lifelong hunter and winner of the prestigious Circle of Chiefs award from the Outdoor Writers Association of America –details reasons for his longtime opposition to this unsporting practice that violates the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, a main tenet of which states that: “Wildlife shall be taken by legal and ethical means, in the spirit of ‘fair chase.’”

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