



## Big Cat Public Safety Act (H.R. 3546)

### Your calls and emails to Congress can end the abuse - please take 5 minutes to speak up for captive big cats!

Big cats – an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 – languish in deplorable conditions in backyards, roadside zoos and traveling exhibits throughout the United States. Tigers and lions should not be pets. They should not be bred and exploited just to make money. While some states have regulations that attempt to protect big cats, decades of experience have proven they are not working. The only solution is to ban private breeding and ownership of big cats. Below are facts about the problem and about the solution – the Big Cat Public Safety Act. **YOU** can help end the misery these big cats endure every day of their lives by taking just a few minutes to follow the easy instructions on the back of this page. Let your federal legislators know **YOU CARE** about these magnificent animals and urge them to cosponsor this bill. Please be their voice!

**Why Federal Regulation Does Not Work.** At the federal level, the Animal Welfare Act charges USDA with creating “minimum standards” for keeping big cats and enforcing those standards. But these very weak rules only apply to owners who “exhibit” the animals, i.e. charge the public to see them. The rules still allow conditions those of us who love animals would consider cruel and abusive, including the photos you see here. When an exhibitor violates the rules, USDA may issue a citation but horrible facilities are often cited year after year with no consequences. A few are finally taken to court, but because USDA has limited legal resources, most court cases are settled for minimal fines. Very few owners ever lose their exhibitor’s license. Even worse, there are no federal rules for people who keep the animals as pets in tiny cages in backyards.



Even when an exhibitor’s license is revoked, the animals are not usually confiscated – they remain in the same horrible conditions. And some of these owners just continue to operate under another person’s license. Meantime, tiger cubs are routinely ripped from their mothers at birth, deprived of sleep and physically punished so exhibitors can make money charging people to pet them, take photos with them, and forcing cubs to swim with people – despite the “regulations” that are supposed to protect these innocent cubs. USDA inspectors do not conduct undercover investigations, so they don’t see most of the abuse cubs suffer, such as being punched in the face. But undercover videos by others show it.

**Why State Regulation Does Not Work.** At the state level, the trend has been to ban private ownership, recognizing these dangerous animals should not be pets. But most state laws exempt people who have a USDA exhibitor’s license. A 2010 audit of USDA by the Office of Inspector General found 70% of private owners with 4 or less cats were actually just pet owners. They obtained a USDA exhibitor license simply to evade the state law.

A few states in recent years have passed better bans that do not exempt USDA licensees. But owners can just move to another state with lax regulations. Some states still have no laws whatsoever. But even in states with “regulations,” the efforts to insure proper care of the big cats suffer from the same ineffectiveness as the federal regulations.



We taxpayers spend millions each year to inspect tigers living in miserable conditions in tiny cages in back yards and road side zoos and still the animals suffer. Decades of very expensive experience shows that for the reasons outlined above, regulation simply does not and cannot work.

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**Public Safety - the Spark That Lit the Flame.** The debate over private ownership of big cats garnered front-page national media attention in 2011 when the owner of a backyard menagerie in Ohio opened the cages of his tigers, leopards, lions, wolves, bears and monkeys before committing suicide. Local police, who were neither trained nor properly equipped to deal with such a dangerous situation, were forced to shoot and kill nearly 50 animals – 38 of them big cats – before the animals could reach populated areas. For many in America, it was the first time they had considered the deadly consequences of private ownership of big cats. America's eyes were opened. In the past two decades alone, U.S. incidents involving captive big cats have resulted in 23 deaths – 5 of them children – and an additional 252 people being mauled. During that time 266 big cats escaped their cages, 146 were killed and 133 were confiscated.



**Key Provisions of the Big Cat Public Safety Act:** This bill will end private possession and breeding of big cats with very limited exemptions. Current owners will be grandfathered in but must register their cats. This will allow first responders called to a fire or burglary to know how many dangerous cats they may face. Zoos which meet the accrediting standards of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums are also exempt. AZA zoos meet the highest standards of care in the industry and only breed pure subspecies of big cats that genetically may have conservation value. Sanctuaries that meet the definition in the bill (i.e. true sanctuaries, not road side zoos claiming to be sanctuaries) are also exempt.

**YOU can make a difference by taking a few minutes to ask your House Representative to Co-Sponsor the Act. It's easy!**

**Step One:** Go to [www.StopBigCatAbuse.com](http://www.StopBigCatAbuse.com) and enter your zip code. You will see a pre-written email message and the name and contact information of your House Representative.

**Step Two:** Call the phone number listed and one of your Representative's aides will answer. If you prefer, you can call at night or on the weekend and just leave a voice message. Phone calls are **ENORMOUSLY** effective because so few people call Congress! Say the following or something similar: "I live in the district in zip code \_\_\_\_\_ and I want to urge your boss to cosponsor the Big Cat Public Safety Act. The bill number is HR 3546. Thank you."

**Step Three:** Fill in your contact information beneath the pre-written email message. **NOTE:** Your message will be much more effective if you change the Subject line a little bit (keep the bill numbers in it though) and add your own simple first sentence so it will not be perceived as a "form" letter, which has less impact. Hit the submit button.

**EVERY CALL AND EMAIL HELPS!** If enough constituents (VOTERS) call and email, legislators will take notice. Legislators have many bills coming at them. The best way this bill will get their attention is for them to know that **MANY** of their constituents care. The only way they know you care is through your calls and emails.

These abused animals like the tiger pictured at right cannot speak. They need us to speak up for them.

**PLEASE BE THEIR VOICE!**

