

The Crusade by Animal Special Interest Groups to Remove Elephants from Circuses

Animal special interest groups are on a crusade to remove elephants from circuses, zoos and wildlife parks, and they have made no secret about this aggressive and extreme agenda in their statements and in the legislation that they have been pushing in Congress and in states and cities across the country.

Plaintiffs and their Experts: In Their Own Words

ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) – National organization

"What we want from the court is to order the circus to stop using the elephants so they can be removed and live in peace." – Nancy Blaney, director of public policy for the national ASPCA.

- "ASPCA Joins Suits Against Circus," *The New York Daily News*, March 30, 2001. http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/2001/03/30/2001-03-30_aspc_a_joins_suit_against_cir.html

The Humane Society of the United States

"The Humane Society of the United States opposes the use of wild animals in circuses and other traveling acts because cruelty to animals is inherent in such displays. We are working to end such uses of wild animals by increasing public awareness and strengthening the federal, state, and local laws that protect captive, wild and exotic animals."

- http://www.hsus.org/wildlife/issues_facing_wildlife/circuses/

Animal Welfare Institute (AWI)

Q – What relief is the Animal Welfare Institute seeking in this case?

A – Ultimately for the elephants to be taken away.

- Deposition of Cathy Liss, Executive Director, AWI, May 18, 2005

Amboseli Trust for Elephants

“Elephants should be removed from all free contact situations where they are expected to perform on demand; the use of elephants in circuses and for elephant back safaris should be outlawed.” – Joyce Poole, Trustee of Amboseli Trust for Elephants and an expert witness for the Plaintiffs, in a 2007 statement to the South African Department of Environment and Tourism.

- Posted at: <http://www.elephanttrust.org/node/376>

Born Free USA United with Animal Protection Institute (The Born Free Foundation is an international organization whose U.S. arm, Born Free USA, is part of the Animal Protection Institute (API), one of the plaintiffs in *ASPCA, et al. v. Feld Entertainment.*)

“Born Free’s ultimate goal is to see an end to the keeping of wild animals in captivity. Even in an imperfect world there should be no zoos.” - Daniel Turner, Born Free Foundation

- http://www.bornfree.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/files/zoo_check/zoo_debate.pdf

Pushing for National, State and Local Legislation to Ban Circuses and Impede Accepted Elephant Handling Practices

Despite legislative defeats, the animal special interest groups persist year after year in seeking passage of legislation by Congress, state legislatures and city councils to ban circuses, prevent use of the guide or tethers, and/or prescribe specific space requirements. These efforts provide these groups with another venue for their publicity campaign. Pending legislation being promoted by these groups includes:

- **Chicago** – In May 2008, an ordinance was introduced to prohibit use of guides and tethers, which would effectively prevent the circus from operating in the city.
- **New York City** – The New York City Council is considering a bill that would regulate the treatment and display of elephants and make elephant cruelty a felony. The bill also specifies minimum hours of exercise.
- **Massachusetts State Legislature** – Proposed legislation in Massachusetts would outlaw the use of the guide.

Currently, none of these pending bills appears likely to move forward this year.

The never-ending legislative assault of animal special interest groups in past years included a **highly publicized – but unsuccessful -- effort in 2000 to win passage of federal legislation to outlaw the presentation of elephants** in circuses. Despite a well-orchestrated, tax payer funded hearing before a congressional subcommittee, the bill never made it out of the committee.

Other unsuccessful state and local efforts by animal special interest groups include: a **Denver Circus Ban**, an initiative in 2004 that was soundly defeated by more than a 2 to 1 margin. The initiative would have banned the exhibition of exotic animals in Denver but exempted other popular events such as the Denver Zoo and the rodeo. Denver newspapers opposed the initiative, supported the animal care record of *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey*[®] and agreed that residents should be able to select their own form of entertainment.

Additionally, the animal special interest groups have failed to gain passage of their extreme legislative proposals over the past few years in state legislatures in **California, Massachusetts, Nebraska, and Connecticut**, and in municipalities such as **New York City, Chicago, Buffalo and Minneapolis**.