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Performing Animal Welfare Society Credits California Bullhook Bans as Turning Point in Circus Decision to Eliminate Elephant Acts

Nation's First Elephant Sanctuary Applauds Historic Announcement

San Andreas, Calif. (March 5, 2015) – The Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), which founded and operates the nation's first elephant sanctuary, is applauding the news that the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus will end the use of elephants in its traveling shows. PAWS is attributing the decision, in great part, to the Los Angeles City Council's unanimous decision in 2013 to ban the use of bullhooks – a menacing weapon resembling a fireplace poker that is used to control elephants through fear and pain – as circuses had stated they would no longer visit the city.

"The Los Angeles bullhook ban was really the tipping point for elephants in circuses," said PAWS president Ed Stewart, "and PAWS is proud to have played a key role in passing that game-changing ordinance."

California's Oakland City Council followed Los Angeles in passing its own bullhook ban in December 2014. Other cities across the U.S. were gearing up to consider similar legislation when Ringling announced its decision.

"We are thrilled at the news that the end is in sight for the use of elephants in the largest U.S. circus," said Stewart. "This is an historic announcement. It signals the beginning of the end of the use of elephants in entertainment."

"PAWS was the first organization to investigate and expose the horrific lives of elephants and other animals used in entertainment," said Stewart, recalling how he and his partner, the late Pat Derby, began documenting the use of animals used in live entertainment, especially circuses, and started the worldwide effort to end their suffering.

Derby, a former Hollywood animal trainer, first championed the cause of performing wild animals nearly 40 years ago following the publication of her tell-all book, *The Lady and Her Tiger*, which exposed the behind-the-scenes abuse of wild animals used in entertainment. Stewart stated, "She was THE voice for lions and tigers in cramped traveling cages and elephants chained by their legs in trucks and railroad cars."

Since its founding 31 years ago, PAWS has continued its investigations, public awareness campaigns and legislative advocacy on behalf of performing animals.

PAWS cares for nine elephants at its 2300-acre natural habitat ARK 2000 sanctuary in San

Andreas, California, along with tigers, lions, bears and black leopard. Among those are former circus elephants who now spend their days roaming spacious habitats and sunning themselves on grassy hillsides, free from chains and bullhooks.

Stewart concluded: "This decision should set an example for anyone who uses elephants for entertainment, including in circuses, rides, and in film, advertising, and television. It's all just wrong."

For more information on PAWS, please visit www.pawsweb.org.

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Founded in 1984, the Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) operates three sanctuaries in Northern California, including the 2300-acre ARK 2000 natural habitat refuge, that are home to a large variety of species including Asian and African elephants, African lions, tigers, and other exotic animals rescued or retired from circuses, zoos and the exotic pet trade.

PAWS is licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. It is accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, and is rated a four-star charity by Charity Navigator and received an "A" rating from CharityWatch.