

*The Nation's First
Elephant Sanctuary*



PAWS
PERFORMING ANIMAL
WELFARE SOCIETY

Founded in 1984
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January 11, 2018

Via Fax

Honorable Chris Christie
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Re: Request for signature on Nosey's Law to prohibit the use of wild animals in traveling shows (A4386/S2508A)

Dear Governor Christie:

As someone who has worked directly with elephants and other wild animals, and on behalf of the Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), I urge you to sign Nosey's Law to end the use of wild animals in traveling acts in New Jersey.

PAWS was formed in 1984 to rescue and care for abused, neglected or retired wild animals, many from the entertainment industry. We operate three captive wildlife sanctuaries in California, including ARK 2000, a 2,300-acre natural habitat refuge where we care for elephants, big cats, bears and other wild animals.

PAWS is recognized internationally for its expertise in the care and management of captive wildlife. I serve on the Director's Advisory Committee on the Humane Care and Treatment of Wild Animals for the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and on the Advisory Committee for the Detroit Zoological Society's Center for Zoo Animal Welfare.

I formerly worked with trained wild animals in the entertainment industry, doing film, television and live appearances. Since then, I have trained and managed captive elephants and other wild animals for more than 30 years.

Based on decades of experience and investigation, I have concluded that it is impossible for a wild animal to live a healthy, normal life while traveling and performing because of conditions that create insurmountable compromises to their welfare. These conditions include stressful and near constant travel; confinement in cramped pens and transport vehicles; prolonged chaining; sterile, unstimulating environments; and standing on improper substrates – all of which can adversely affect animal health and lower life expectancy. Cruel devices and violent methods are often utilized to train and manage the animals, including the bullhook, a menacing weapon resembling a fireplace poker that is used to control elephants through pain and fear. (At PAWS we provide a full range of husbandry and veterinary care for our elephants using only positive reinforcement methods.)

At the PAWS sanctuary, some of our animals have come from circuses. The fear of punishment was clearly evident in the elephants, who had been trained with the bullhook. When they first arrived, they would flinch or cower if you so much as moved your arm too quickly, expecting to be reprimanded with a swift jab or hit. The circus lions were hyper-aggressive, compared to lions from other backgrounds. We attributed their behavior to the long-term effects of travel, training and performing.

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Captive tigers, lions and elephants – including those who were captive born and hand raised – remain wild animals with distinctive needs. And there is simply no evidence to suggest that their complex needs can be met in traveling shows. The animals' inability to cope with stressful and unnatural conditions is often manifested in physical ailments and psychological disorders. For example, the tricks elephants are made to perform degenerate joints that are not designed by nature for repeatedly sitting or standing upright, and often end elephants' lives painfully and prematurely. Abnormal repetitive behaviors such as pacing in big cats and swaying, rocking and head bobbing in elephants are ubiquitous in traveling shows.

Wild animal shows do not educate children or further conservation efforts. They distort the public's understanding of these animals and their endangered status in the wild, and mislead people into believing the animals are living an acceptable life when evidence for the opposite is overwhelming. Research has found that seeing a wild animal like the chimpanzee in an entertainment context can actually hamper conservation efforts. This is especially concerning since traveling shows often feature endangered species such as Asian elephants and tigers.

Today, public standards regarding the use and treatment of wild animals in entertainment are rapidly evolving. New York State and Illinois have banned the use of elephants in traveling acts, and major cities such as Los Angeles and New York have voted to regulate the use of wild animals in circuses and other shows. At least 125 jurisdictions across the U.S. have restrictions in place addressing the use of wild animals in performances, and more are considering such action.

New Jersey has the opportunity to take a progressive and compassionate stand for performing wild animals. I urge you to sign A4386/S2508A into law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Stewart', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ed Stewart
President and Co-founder
Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)