



*Our Mission...*  
*To encourage the growth and preservation*  
*of the outdoor amusement industry through*  
*leadership, legislation, education and*  
*membership services.*

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June 27, 2012

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
 Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources  
 1324 Longworth House Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20515

**RE: H.R. 4122**

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the over 10,000 family businesses involved in the mobile amusement industry, we write today in opposition to H.R. 4122, a bill that would unjustly impact the ability of federally licensed animal exhibitors such as circuses, fairs, animal parks and zoos, to maintain tigers and other species of big cats as part of their animal collections, exhibitions and educational outreach.

Since 1965 the OABA has represented carnivals, circuses, food and game concessionaires and others associated with the mobile, outdoor amusement business, which operate at state and county fairs, festivals and other civic, religious or philanthropic organizations such as the Shrine Temple fundraising events. In addition to our agricultural fair exhibitors, OABA also represents approximately 60 circuses, animal acts and petting zoo members, providing safe, affordable, "G" rated, family entertainment and education at venues throughout the U.S.

HR 4122 would prohibit the breeding, transportation and possession of several species of big cats by removing current federal exemptions for exhibitors licensed, regulated and inspected by the USDA, in favor of an exemption limited to those eligible facilities that voluntarily join the AZA, a private zoo trade association which has no enforcement or oversight authority.

Furthermore, while H.R. 4122 purports to address issues of illegal trafficking and public safety, it is based on several faulty premises and, in fact, could harm the ability of professional animal exhibitors to engage in meaningful conservation and education activities.

Currently, even the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the World Wildlife Fund acknowledge that there is no evidence that tigers or their parts are being illegally trafficked in the United States, nor that the breeding of these animals by non AZA zoos is fueling any type of underground trade.

As for public safety, the bill does little to address that issue as well. Operators who engage in any type of public exhibition of animals must currently obtain a federal Class C

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\* Deceased

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources  
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Exhibitors License from the USDA. These Class C Exhibitors – which include all zoos, animal parks, fair operators and circuses – but not all sanctuaries -- are subject to the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act and are regularly inspected by USDA's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Under the Animal Welfare Act, all licensees must ensure that there are adequate barriers between the public and the animals and that the animals are well cared for, including housing, veterinary care and handling. Failure to do so can result in enforcement actions by the Agency and loss of one's license.

While HR 4122 applies to these activities which are already regulated, its prohibition does not necessarily extend to activities that remain outside of federal reach and within the borders of individual states. As a result, all HR 4122 accomplishes is to further restrict the activities of professional exhibitors that are already subject to oversight and enforcement – not activities that are currently unregulated and, perhaps in some instances, unaccountable.

For many of our members, working with exotic animals such as big cats is the sole livelihood of their family. Their knowledge and expertise has been passed down through generations and has provided so many Americans their first and perhaps most memorable encounter with these animals, many of whom are critically endangered in the wild and who serve as 'ambassadors' to remind us of the need to engage in conservation activities that protect their future survival. To take away the opportunity to educate and inspire the public through responsible, regulated public display serves no purpose at all.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We urge you and your committee to reject HR 4122.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "J".

Robert W. Johnson  
President & CEO