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[www.elephantconservation.org](http://www.elephantconservation.org)

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2 March 2009

The Honorable Richard Roy - Co- Chair  
The Honorable Edward Meyer - Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on the Environment  
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Meyer and Representative Roy:

The International Elephant Foundation (IEF) is writing to express our opposition to Connecticut State Legislative Bill HB 6555.

The International Elephant Foundation provides funds and expertise to support in situ and ex situ elephant conservation. These programs include conservation, research, education and improvements in husbandry of elephants in human care. Thanks to the contributions from our board members and other institutions and individuals that care for elephants, the IEF has been able to contribute over \$1.5 million to elephant programs since 1999. Each year millions of people visit our Board Member institutions to see and learn about elephants.

The IEF Board of Directors has over 250 years of accumulated experience working with elephants and represent some of the leading elephant facilities in North America and Europe, including some of the largest zoos and circuses. IEF members and their institutions are directly involved in the day to day care of elephants and have direct first hand experience with doing what is best for the animals in our care. At the same time each of us is committed to advancing the preservation of elephants everywhere.

Elephants in North America are important ambassadors for the habitat and species in range countries. Wild elephants benefit through effective conservation education activities and fund-raising programs developed and maintained through elephant exhibition. We provide people of all ages and from all socio-economic levels with the opportunity to see, admire, respect, touch and be amazed by elephants. Our goal is to inspire young and old alike to be concerned about habitat and the conservation of elephants, and to practice good stewardship of the Earth's animals and plants. The personal experiences found in elephant exhibition cannot be duplicated in other mediums, including the two-dimensional worlds of the Internet, books and video.

Legislative Bill HB 6555 is based on the assumption that current animal welfare standards for elephants are inadequate. The IEF believes that the regulations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Animal Welfare Act, as supplemented by the standards stated in the Elephant Husbandry Resource Guide and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums guidelines meet the biological and physiological needs of these species. IEF believes the key to caring for elephants successfully in North America must include attention to the animal's social needs by providing opportunities for the elephants to reproduce and establish a social group, and attention to their psychological needs through behavioral enrichment supervised by well-trained and caring staff. In addition, elephant care staff should be provided with all of the "tools in the toolbox of elephant management techniques, including the guide (ankus or bullhook) and chains. Used

properly these tools are not abusive, but they are easily maligned by those who wish to use emotion-based arguments to sway the uninformed.

A guide is a tool used in the management behavior training of elephants in many zoos as well as circuses. The guide is a tool that is used to teach, guide, and direct the elephant into the proper position or to reinforce a command given by adding a physical cue to a verbal command. The intent of the guide is similar to the use of a leash on a dog or a bridle on a horse. The ultimate goal of the elephant handler is to have the elephant respond on verbal commands alone using the guide as little as possible, but when used properly the guide is a humane and effective tool for cuing the appropriate response to a command. All handlers should be instructed and knowledgeable in the proper use of the guide prior to working with an elephant so that the guide is not used improperly. As new handlers must learn the use of the guide, so must the elephant learn what is expected from the cues of the guide. An untrained elephant does not understand the "language" of the cues, similarly as a dog not taught to walk on a lead pulls its owner.

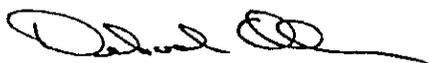
Leg restraints or tethers are an acceptable and necessary tool in the management of captive elephants. Chains are often used because they are strong, sanitary and will not damage the skin. Tethers provide a means to limit an elephant's movements allowing for the safe handling of the elephant. Limiting the elephant's movement can facilitate foot work, feeding, veterinary procedures, elephant transports, elephant introductions, parturition, scientific investigation, training new handlers, training new behaviors, prevent fighting, protect facilities, as well as to fulfill many other management and husbandry needs.

This bill would impose arbitrary tool restrictions that would be impossible for circuses to satisfy and thus would effectively ban them from caring for elephants in the state of Connecticut. The arbitrariness is further borne out by the fact that a zoo or other no-traveling exhibitor would not be prohibited from using these same tools, as in fact many in the United States do. Not only would this legislation do nothing to ensure elephant welfare, but it would actually undermine the hard work and commitments made by those individuals and institutions which have devoted themselves to the care and preservation of elephants. That is why we are opposed to this legislation.

The outside proponents of this legislation are activist groups who are pushing a political agenda that would eliminate elephants from zoos and circuses. However, they do this without any credible knowledge base about elephants. Instead they are driven by an animal rights philosophy that is opposed to elephants in captivity regardless of the quality of care. Fortunately, their beliefs do not represent the majority of the American public who believe that accredited zoos, circuses and professional elephant facilities play an important role in the conservation of all species. This statement is supported by the fact that more people attend just zoos each year than all major professional sporting events nationwide, and the public's attendance is even greater when you consider all of the people who attend circuses and other forms of elephant exhibitions annually.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. Please do not hesitate to contact the IEF if you have any questions on this or other elephant related issues.

Sincerely,



Deborah Olson  
Executive Director

cc: Members of the Environment Committee