



Outdoor Amusement Business Association

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

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* John Portemont 1971
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March 2, 2009

The Honorable Edward Meyer and Richard Roy
Connecticut General Assembly
Joint Committee on the Environment
Legislative Office Building, Room #3200
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: HB 6555 – Concerning the Treatment of Elephants

Dear Representativess Meyer and Roy:

On behalf of the Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA), we are writing in opposition to HB 6555. We believe the legislation demonstrates a misunderstanding of elephant management and is redundant, in light of existing rules and regulations governing the care and treatment of exhibition animals, both at the federal and local levels.

According to the Elephant Husbandry Resource Guide (“BHRG”) published by the International Elephant Foundation (IEF) in conjunction with the Elephant Managers Association (EMA) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), there are two generally accepted forms of elephant management – “free contact”, which involves handlers sharing the same space as the animal; and “protected contact”, in which the animal is managed through protective barriers with no direct contact. Most elephant facilities (e.g., zoos and animal parks) fall somewhere along a continuum between absolute free contact and absolute protected contact, using a mixture of management practices in response to the needs of the animals in their care, the experience level of their staff, and the physical constraints of the facility.

Elephants in traveling shows are managed under the free contact system, which requires continuous supervision of the animal when outside its primary enclosure. In virtually every elephant management system employed, a guide or “ankus” is an essential and required tool. Used properly, the ankus provides important behavioral cues to the animal to guide the animal through desired behaviors. Additionally, chains are employed not only because of their strength but because they are the most hygienic and easily cleaned form of restraint. Tethered elephants are always provided ample room to turn, lie down and make all normal postural adjustments, while ensuring that their food source remains clear of their waste.

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Performing elephants are not only well cared for, they are in exceptional physical condition, due to a regular routine of exercise during rides and performances. To allege otherwise demonstrates a limited understanding of elephants, their abilities, and the care they are provided.

For your reference, enclosed please find a copy of our Animal Welfare and Education dvd.

The proposed legislation, which prohibits or greatly restricts the use of an ankus, chains and similar tools fails to consider their proper – and appropriate – role in elephant management and assumes only the most extreme and irresponsible misuse. It also fails to take into consideration existing laws and regulations against a myriad of other abusive behavior, such as local animal cruelty laws and the role of the USDA under the Animal Welfare Act or “AWA” (7 U.S.C. §2131 et seq).

As licensed exhibitors, zoos and circuses are subject to regular inspections and regulations promulgated under the AWA. The code of federal regulations at 9 C.F.R. §2.131(a)(1) specifically states that animals be handled “as carefully as possible in a way that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort” (emphasis added).

OABA members include carnivals, circuses (performers and performing exotic/domestic animal acts), food and game concessionaires and others associated with the mobile outdoor amusement business that operate at state and county fairs, festivals and other civic, religious or philanthropic activities such as Shrine Temple fundraising events. In addition to our agricultural exhibitors, OABA also represents approximately 60 circuses, animal acts and petting zoo members operating within the U.S., providing safe, affordable, “G” rated, family entertainment and education.

Similar legislation was rejected by the Connecticut Assembly last session and should be again this year. On behalf of the over 10,000 family owned business that comprise OABA, I urge you and your colleagues to reject any efforts to enact this bill into law. Should you have any questions or seek additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Johnson

Robert W. Johnson
President

Enclosure