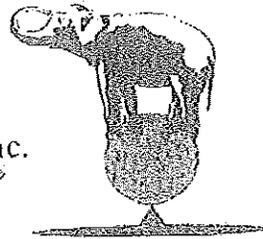


HAVE TRUNK^{Inc.}
WILL TRAVEL



March 8, 2009

Joint Committee on Environment
Connecticut General Assembly
Hartford, CT

RE: Opposition to HB 6555 regarding the humane treatment of traveling elephants; Please let this letter be made a matter of public record to be included in any hearing, studies and/or reports pertaining to this issue.

Dear Senators and Representatives:

Experts in elephant care such as the Elephant Manager's Association, The International Elephant Foundation's Elephant Resource Husbandry Guide, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians and the American Veterinary Medical Association all have guidelines and/or policies in place for the use of the bullhook or ankus, (more appropriately called the guide), and chains (more appropriately called tethers).

We have cared for and trained elephants for over sixty cumulative years. We both sit on many animal welfare boards and committees. We are members of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and participate in the Species Survival Plan. Gary Johnson is a founding board member of the International Elephant Foundation. We are members of the California State Fish and Game Animal Welfare Advisory Board. We are members as well as past and/or present animal welfare committee members of the Western Fairs Association, the Outdoor Amusement Business Association and the Elephant Manager's Association. Our elephants participate in important research projects to advance elephant health. We have an elephant breeding program to insure the survival of this endangered species. Our elephants also travel to fairs and other events to offer shows and rides.

We love elephants and care about their welfare. We know that guides and tethers do not harm elephants and in fact are the tools that enable us to give them the best care possible.

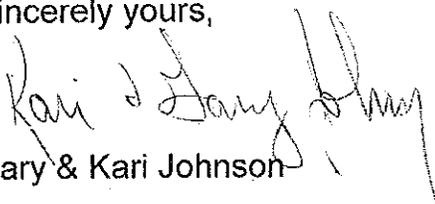
Use of the guide and tethers, which this bill seeks to make illegal, make it possible for veterinarians to safely provide care for their elephant patients without sedation or anesthesia for routine examination and treatment. They make it possible for handlers to give elephants hands on care like bathing, exercise and even help with the birthing process. These tools and their uses have been developed, have evolved over the years and are in use today because the experts recognize that they are humane and effective.

We understand that the intent of the bill is to prevent the mistreatment of traveling elephants. Any such abuse should be dealt with by the governmental agencies specifically charged with this task. At the federal level this would be the United States Department of Agriculture/APHIS, Animal Welfare, which licenses and inspects all owners of elephants and their permanent facilities as well as the travel sites where they perform.

The elephants that the people of Connecticut meet at the fairs and circuses that come to their town are often the only chance they will have to do so. Please do not deprive your constituents of the experience of a lifetime.

We respectfully ask that you oppose HB 6555.

Sincerely yours,


Gary & Kari Johnson