

Karen Laski, [REDACTED]

In support of Elephant Bill HB 6555 and Leghold trap SB 994

I am here to ask that you ban two weapons that should never be used. The first is the steel-jaw leghold trap. In 1974 my friend's newly adopted dog had her ankle snapped off by a leg-hold trap. While being driven to the vet, she laid in Charlie's lap screaming in pain with the trap still hanging on to her severed foot. She died in his arms.

The bullhook.....I have personally seen trainers and other workers in traveling shows hook elephants in the mouth and ears and drag them, if the elephant wasn't walking fast enough or had stopped to pick up some hay or relieve themselves. I have witnessed this at Ringling, Cole Brothers, Carson and Barnes, Walker brothers, Sterling and Reid, Universoul and Commerford traveling shows. I saw a baby elephant being spooked by the yelling and foot stomping of three Ringling workers who poked her with bullhooks until he or she defecated before the performance. Many times, at a show, I've seen trainers bullhooking elephants inside the mouth and ears, grabbing them and walking around in a circle with no attention to the elephant behind them. The trainers were not even watching her, they were talking on cell phones or joking with co-workers.

The bullhook is taken casually by the people who use them and is advertised as an essential tool of the trade, but it hurts. An elephants skin is extremely sensitive in many areas, especially the areas the bullhook is traditionally used. I've elephants squealing in pain, recoiling and visibly frightened from the use or threat of the bullhook.

The bullhooks is a heavy, sharp pointed weapon. Circus hype about its being an extension of the arm or guide with a harmless effect on elephants permits trainers to use it in public view with some reserve and behind the scenes with no restraint whatsoever. Children seeing bullhooks and whips, learn it is okay to bully and hurt animals.

Weapons are not allowed in CT arenas, yet every time circuses come to CT, they bring several of these weapons with them.

Years ago, when video was released to the public showing animals behind the scenes, Ringling reacted by staging an Animal open house which allowed the public to come backstage one hour before the show. This was also staged for legislators. Some of the elephants, confined to a small area are allowed out of their chains for this exhibition. The genius PR of Ringling actually convinces some people that elephants are content on concrete floors in parking garages. These elephants have been beaten until they are broken and go back to their chains directly after the show. I attended an open house in 2004 and caught a glimpse behind a curtain of an elephant not quite broken enough to be on display. He was chained by two legs and was thrashing around in obvious distress. In 2008 I attended another open house, chains are still there, nothing has changed.

Hurting elephants is cruel and something we should not allow in our state. If Ringling holds legislators hostage by saying they cannot come to CT without beating elephants, then they can go somewhere else. True family entertainment can fill the gap. Justifying cruelty by saying it upholds tradition or expedites circus business does not hold water for civilized people. Banning this weapon from our state is the least we can do for elephants.

The evidence is here in this video. Much of the footage is mine in CT.

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