

Summary of the Big Cats Public Safety Act (as of 6/5/17)

- H.R. 1818, introduced by Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA), has 52 cosponsors (13 Republicans, 39 Democrat). There is not yet a Senate companion bill.
- Animal welfare: The bill protects and supports the welfare of big cats by assuring that only qualified USDA Class C licensees can possess these animals. AZA-accredited facilities would be exempt from the prohibitions in the bill as would other exhibitors who can meet the commonsense criteria in the bill including:
 - ensuring that individuals involved in animal care have followed and are following the relevant local, state, and federal laws regarding abuse and neglect
 - following Animal Welfare Act requirements regarding veterinary care, inspections, and public safety
 - ensuring that only qualified professional come into direct physical contact
 - ensuring that during public exhibition the prohibited wildlife species is at least fifteen feet from members of the public unless there is a permanent barrier that prevents public contact or risk of contact unless:
 - the direct physical contact occurs with individuals involved with or directly supporting conservation programs of the facility
 - the contact is incidental to husbandry conducted pursuant to a population management plan
 - the contact is not in the course of commercial activity
 - breeding is conducted pursuant to a species-specific, publicly available, peer-edited population management plan that reflects established conservation science principles, incorporates genetic and demographic analysis, and promotes animal welfare by ensuring an appropriate frequency of breeding
 - maintaining liability insurance of not less than \$250,000 for each occurrence of property damage, bodily injury, or death caused by any prohibited wildlife species possessed by the person
 - having a written plan that is made available to local law enforcement, state agencies, and federal agencies on request for the quick and safe recapture or destruction of the animals
- Public safety: The bill will help to protect the public by assuring that only qualified entities that have adequate facilities and trained professional staff will possess big cats. The current patchwork of state laws and regulations has resulted in big cats living in backyards, basements, and run-down facilities in several states and communities.

Summary of AZA's Involvement with the Legislation

AZA staff has been working with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) since at least 2012 to find mutually agreeable language for the "Big Cat Public Safety Act." AZA concerns had included the ability of SSPs working on the sustainability of certain felid species to continue to be able to work with partners outside of the AZA membership.

The 2012 version of the legislation included an AZA exemption. In 2014 the exemption included AZA members and certified related facilities working with AZA institutions as part of an SSP for breeding species listed as threatened or endangered. In 2015 the exemption included institutions accredited by the AZA and certain facilities that have an active written contract with an AZA SSP or TAG for breeding prohibited wildlife species. H.R. 1818 (2017 version) exempts qualified USDA-licensed exhibitors. AZA members would fall under the

listed criteria but it is possible that entities with which our felid SSPs work would not be exempt. The relevant felid TAGs have had the opportunity to review the legislation and provide comments to AZA staff before introduction in 2017 and 2015.

AZA staff has a good working relationship with IFAW staff, and IFAW staff has been amenable to accepting our changes. For example, they have been willing to exempt AZA cheetah and clouded leopard outreach programs. However, they had been unwilling to include language to exempt the non-AZA members who work with our SSPs because that would exempt some of the facilities that they believe should not be allowed to possess or breed big cats.

While the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has always supported this legislation, they are taking a more active role in working toward its passage in the 115th Congress. Detroit Zoo has endorsed the bill and participated in a congressional briefing in 2015. The Zoological Association of America (ZAA) has traditionally opposed this legislation.

Dan Ashe (AZA) and Wayne Pacelle (HSUS) have been directly negotiating with each other to find mutually agreeable language for the bill. They are working together on a letter of support for the bill that also rebuts claims about the bill made by ZAA. The summary included in this document reflects the provisions of the bill based on these negotiations.

Next steps include finalizing bill and support letter language, outreach to all AZA members (particularly those with big cats), ensuring that Representative Denham approves the proposed changes, and developing a Senate strategy.