

December 12, 2012

12-0186

Los Angeles City Council  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

I am writing in opposition to the proposed ban on the use of elephants in circuses and other traveling exhibitions in the city of Los Angeles.

First, the ban is unnecessary. Circuses are under frequent inspection and have been proven to take good care of their animals. There has been only one scientific study on wild animals performing in circuses. Dr. Martha Kiley-Worthington, of the University of Edinburgh, conducted an 18-month study of circus animals. Her study was commissioned by an animal rights organization so any experimental bias would have been expected to be in their favor. After her extensive study she concluded that the animals were healthy, only rarely displayed any signs of fear or distress, and there was a high degree of "mutual respect, trust and affection between the animals and their trainers or handlers." The truth is that the average lifespan for elephants in circuses and zoos is longer than the average lifespan for elephants in the wild because they are protected, their physical and emotional needs are met on a daily basis, and they receive veterinary care.

I traveled with three different circuses as an employee, and have visited friends on other shows. I can testify from personal experience that the animals on those shows all received outstanding treatment. In fact they received better care than the human employees. On every show grounds I have been on the rule was that when the water truck arrived no humans were able to get water until after all the animals had been watered and their troughs or buckets were full. Also, we could not have breakfast until after the animals had all been fed and their other daily needs met.

Second, the ban will negatively impact the well being of endangered animals. Endangered animals are not thriving in the wild. Two AP articles on December 5 pointed this out. According to one article 80% of the wild elephant herd in Cameroon has been destroyed by poachers in the past decade, and the remaining wild elephants in that country will be extinct within five years. Zebra and rhinoceros are all ready extent in that country. According to the other article the wild lion population in Africa has declined 75% in the last 50 years due to habitat destruction and other actions by humans. Wild lions have completely vanished from some of the national parks set up in Africa as sanctuaries for these animals. Without human intervention endangered animals will become extinct.

The circus industry has historically worked to preserve and propagate endangered species. For example, the Pere David Deer would be extinct without the work of Jimmy Chipperfield, a circus owner, who preserved a herd, bred them in captivity, and successfully reintroduced them into the wild. The Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus, Carson & Barnes Circus, and Have Trunk Will Travel have all three been leaders in the breeding and protection of elephants in captivity. Portions of their admission sales and other funds support their elephant sanctuaries and breeding programs. In addition, they are funding efforts to find a cure for Elephantine Herpes Virus, a disease that is fatal in both captive and wild elephant populations. (Neither Pat Derby of Carol Buckley contributes to this effort.) A ban on elephants in traveling circuses will cut off this funding source that is benefiting the animals.

I urge you to vote no on this ban.

*Bruce Johnson*

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**PROTEST**

BY EGG CITY CLERK  
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