



# THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

## Celebrating Animals | Confronting Cruelty

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March 27, 2017

Councilmember David Ryu  
Los Angeles City Hall, Room 425  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

### Re: **Support for Ordinance Prohibiting Wild Animal Acts**

Dear Councilmember Ryu,

On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States and our Los Angeles supporters, I am writing to express our strong support for the proposed ordinance to prohibit performing wild and exotic animals in Los Angeles. We thank you for proposing this important piece of legislation and commend your leadership on this issue.

With the wealth of information that is now available about the rich and varied lives that elephants, tigers, lions and other wild animals naturally lead, it's become apparent that life in a traveling show can be nothing but misery for them. Trained with pain and the fear of punishment, caged and chained in trucks and trailers, forced to endure months of grueling travel, and bullied to perform silly tricks, animals in circuses and other traveling displays are denied everything that is natural and important to them.

These types of animal displays also pose a threat to public safety by bringing people into dangerously close proximity to incredibly powerful, unpredictable, and stressed wild animals. Circus goers have been injured by animals including elephants, chimpanzees, tigers, and bears and, as long as wild animals are used in circuses, dangerous incidents will continue to occur.

A prohibition on performing wild animal acts will not have an adverse impact on the local economy. Economists roundly agree that exotic animal displays do not generate new economic spending in a region. They simply redistribute a family's discretionary spending because most households have an entertainment budget that will be spent in the local economy, whether it's on miniature golf, a ball game, a movie, or a circus. Since the owners and others associated with traveling animal shows do not reside in Los Angeles, when the show leaves town, much of the revenue leaves with them.

Further, the public's enthusiasm for animal-based circuses has been dwindling for decades. According to a November 2016 article in *Forbes* magazine, circus attendance in the United States has dropped an estimated 30 to 50 percent over the last 20 years and gross revenue from circuses in the U.S. fell almost 9 percent between 2007 and 2012.

Many circuses are responding to the public's distaste for the use of wild animals in circuses by choosing to modify their shows, while others, including Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, are simply closing down due to declining ticket sales. California-based Circus Vargas long ago eliminated all animal acts in order to cut costs and has seen attendance numbers grow between 3% and 6% over the last few years. A handful of Shrine Circuses have either eliminated, or announced plans to eliminate, elephants and other wild animal acts. And contemporary shows, like Cirque du Soleil and Circus 1903, which features life-size elephant puppets, are dazzling crowds across the country.

Local governments are also reacting as citizens express concern about the appearance of wild animal shows in their communities. The states of Rhode Island and California, and more than 125 jurisdictions across the U.S., including at least 16 other cities or counties in California, have passed restrictions governing the use of wild animals in circuses and traveling shows and many others are considering similar measures. Los Angeles has long been a leader on this issue and taking the next step to ban all wild animal acts will send the message that Los Angeles cares deeply about the humane treatment of all performing animals.

It's time to end the outdated and abusive era of wild animal acts in circuses. We thank you for your leadership and we are here to assist you throughout this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Paquette". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nicole" and the last name "Paquette" clearly legible.

Nicole G. Paquette  
Vice President, Wildlife Protection