



March 27, 2017

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

Dear Councilmember Ryu,

On behalf of Born Free USA, a national nonprofit animal advocacy and wildlife conservation organization, and our Los Angeles members, I want to thank you for introducing a motion to ban the use of wild animals for performances and amusement. This bill provides a sensible restriction on inhumane shows, with commonsense exemptions that include legitimate film productions, and it builds upon a growing public concern for animals used for entertainment.

The monkeys, elephants, reptiles, and other animals used in circuses, public exhibitions, and at private events are deprived of everything that is important to them. They are kept in small cages or on concrete floors, denied the opportunity to express their physical and social needs, and forced to spend endless hours in transit. Their training often involves punishing methods, and their handlers may beat, restrain, and sedate them. Animals kept in such conditions frequently display abnormal behaviors such as rocking, swaying, pacing, and self-mutilation. This "zoochosis," as it is called, indicates extreme mental distress stemming from severe deprivation. Unlike human entertainers, animals do not choose to perform; they are kept imprisoned and forced to take part in the show. These are wild animals with natural instincts and they deserve freedom and autonomy away from this exploitative spectacle.

The inhumane conditions for wild and exotic animals in traveling animal acts are compounded by the threat these animals pose to the public. Wild animals are inherently unpredictable and incapable of being tamed. Born Free USA's [Exotic Animal Incidents Database](#) details many instances of escapes, attacks, and injuries to both humans and animals in California. For instance, just last year in Oakland, two zebras got loose from UniverSoul Circus and ran down a major East Oakland Road before being recaptured. A camel escaped from Ramos Brothers Circus and ran through the city of Glendale. In Yucca Valley, two elephants with the Culpepper and Merriweather Circus broke loose after a performance, stepped on a circus ticket-taker, and then terrified residents as they wandered through the community. Elsewhere around the country, individuals in close proximity to performing animals have been bitten, kicked, charged at, and even killed. These are just a few of many tragic incidents, and serve to illustrate that exposing the public to wild animals is never without risk.

The federal Animal Welfare Act provides only very minimal standards for care of animals used in entertainment, and so laws at the state and local level are crucial to end this exploitation. I thank you for introducing the motion, and hope that other legislators will follow your lead and swiftly pass this humane legislation.

Sincerely,

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