

March 27, 2017

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



525 East Cotati Avenue
Cotati, California 94931

T 707.795.2533
F 707.795.7280

RE: Letter to Support Exotic Animal Exhibition Ban

Dear Councilmember Ryu:

I write on behalf of the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) and our nearly 200,000 members and supporters - more than 6,000 of whom live in the Los Angeles area - to support the proposed ban on the use of wild or exotic animals for entertainment in LA, including in circuses, public exhibition and at private events. ALDF has supported similar bans in numerous cities, such as San Francisco and New York, and we hope that Los Angeles continues its long-standing role as a pioneer in animal protection by enacting such an ordinance here.

For nearly four decades, ALDF has worked to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. Through litigation and legislative efforts, we have seen the impact of captivity on wild animals and recognize the importance of legal limits on display of exotic animals for the benefit of these animals as well as the public. Wild animals used for entertainment are often deprived of physical, safety and psychological needs, thereby harming the welfare of these animals. The combination of the lack of these basic needs, the coercive control techniques utilized by trainers handling performing animals, and chronic stress from both of these factors can ultimately lead to risks to public safety in the name of entertainment. Numerous companies in the Los Angeles area promote “exotic animal rentals” for private parties and other events.¹ Even with trainings and safety protocols in place, wild animals can act instinctively and therefore unpredictably, and may attempt to attack or escape, thereby posing risks to public safety when these animals are interacting with the public for entertainment purposes.

The need for a local ordinance in Los Angeles is particularly great as current law does not adequately protect wild and exotic animals used in performances from abuse and mistreatment. As the major federal law governing the treatment of animals in commercial settings – the Animal Welfare Act – sets forth only the barest minimum standards for animal care, and the USDA lacks the resources to meaningfully enforce even these standards, local municipalities plays a crucial role in animal protection. State and local law enforcement agencies are similarly ineffective at preventing cruel treatment. For example, a federal judge in Iowa recently found that operators of a roadside zoo had actually killed and injured big cats through neglect. Despite the court’s determination, the USDA renewed the operators’

¹ See e.g., <http://www.partiesfantastic.com/animal-shows/exotic-animal-party/> and <http://piratesforparties.com/exotic-animals-for-rent-hire-for-party-event.htm> as two examples.

license, the state agency gave glowing reviews, and the local sheriff's office—cozy with the licensees—found nothing wrong with a facility where more than half a dozen big cats died over the course of just three years.

In short, the only truly effective way to protect wild and exotic animals from the harms intrinsic to this industry is to prohibit the use of these animals in public entertainment. Los Angeles now has the opportunity to join nearly 60 localities in the United States – and six in Southern California alone – regulating the use of wild animals for entertainment. On behalf of ALDF and its members, I hope that LA seizes this chance to protect animals and the public.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindsay Larris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lindsay K. Larris, Esq.
Regional Director, ALDF-Los Angeles
LLarris@aldf.org
310-923-1465