



Michael Espinosa <michael.espinosa@lacity.org>

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## Council File #17-0453

1 message

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**Mimi Roberts** <webmaster@lazoo.org>  
Reply-To: mimi@artsee1.com  
To: clerk.cps@lacity.org, michael.espinosa@lacity.org

Mon, Feb 26, 2018 at 12:51 PM

Sent by the Los Angeles Zoo on behalf of:

Mimi Roberts  
1181 Aztec  
Topanga, California 90290  
3107298818  
[mimi@artsee1.com](mailto:mimi@artsee1.com)

Dear Los Angeles City Council Arts, Entertainment, Parks and River Committee Member,

As an animal care volunteer and a supporter of the Los Angeles Zoo, I urge you to dismiss L.A. City Council motion #17-0453 that would send Billy the Asian elephant to a sanctuary.

I was also formerly an animal care volunteer at the National Zoo in Washington, DC. My son Max, who is also a volunteer at the Los Angeles Zoo, grew up going to zoos and aquariums and plans to attend college next year and pursue a career as a zoologist and conservationist.

My son's interest in saving wildlife habitat began by visiting zoos and developing an appreciation for the animals he had the privilege of experiencing. Zoos are important. They provide the opportunity for a person to see in real life an animal that they otherwise may never have the opportunity of seeing and appreciating. I remember the day I had the opportunity at the National Zoo to stroke the trunk of an elephant. It was one of the most memorable experiences of my life. It inspired me to learn everything I could about elephants, and a few years later I saved up enough money to go to Africa and see elephants in their natural habitat. I developed a deep appreciation of the plight of animals in the wild and their dwindling habitat. I also developed a deep appreciation of the important role of zoos - especially now when natural habitats are disappearing at an alarming rate.

Without a doubt, the Los Angeles Zoo and its keepers take good care of Billy and the other Asian elephants that reside there. I've observed the keepers' handling of the elephants, toured the elephants' facility twice since I've been a volunteer and have spent a lot of time over the past five years visiting the elephant exhibit. As an animal care volunteer, I can attest that the zoo keepers at this zoo very much care for and go out of their way to take good care of the animals in their charge. It is actually very inspiring to see such dedication to animals by people who take care of them on a daily basis. For me, whether or not Billy the elephant is receiving the best care he can is not the issue. As zoos modernize and develop better exhibits for the animals and the viewing public, I believe the issue of animal care is becoming less of a valid argument by animal welfare activists. While I believe these activists do care about the welfare of Billy, I believe that they are of a narrow mind-set without giving consideration to the bigger picture and are misguided in their attempts to have Billy moved to an animal sanctuary where his influence and ability to affect change will be lessened.

Perhaps the greatest point that needs to be made is that Billy the elephant is an ambassador for his species. He has the opportunity to educate and inspire those that come to see him who may not otherwise know or develop an interest in preserving natural habitat for his species. He is an important ambassador for the future of his fellow elephants in the wild. Is his life a sacrifice then for his fellow wild elephants? I don't believe so. I look at Billy's role as ambassador for his species as a privilege rather than a sacrifice - he has the opportunity to educate and inspire so many people... like my son who, if it weren't for zoos, would not be going off to college next year to pursue a career in zoology and animal conservation.

Sincerely,

Mimi Roberts

Mimi Roberts

[mimi@artsee1.com](mailto:mimi@artsee1.com)

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens (<http://www.lazoo.org>)