



Big Cat Public Safety Act (H.R. 3546)

The **Big Cat Public Safety Act** is an amendment to the Lacey Act (prohibits trade in illegally sourced wildlife or plant products) to clarify the Captive Wildlife Safety Act (prohibits trade/transport of big cats across state lines) effectively ending private ownership and breeding of big cats in the United States

Details of the Bill

- “Big cat” refers to tigers, lions, leopards, snow leopards, clouded leopards, cheetahs, jaguars, and cougars
- Current big cat owners will be able to keep their animals, but will be required to register them with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and will be prohibited from breeding them
- **Exemptions include:** state universities, Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoos, wildlife sanctuaries that do not breed their animals, and select circuses
- Penalties include a fine of up to \$20,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison for each violation; seizure and relocation of the big cat(s)

Public Safety

- Privately owned big cats pose a danger to both their owners and the public
- In the past 20 years, 24 people have been killed by big cats with another 200 mauled or injured
- Law enforcement officials place themselves in very real danger when confronting an escaped big cat, as they have no training in these types of scenarios

Conservation

- Privately owned tigers and other big cats serve no conservation value
- Because their genetic pedigree cannot be accurately traced, they will never contribute to repopulation efforts in the wild
- Only AZA accredited zoos have a Species Survival Plan for tigers to effectively manage their captive population (approx. 5% of the U.S. tiger population)

Animal Welfare

- It costs an average of \$10,000 to feed a tiger for a year
- While some big cat owners may have good intentions, they often underestimate the financial burden resulting in sub-par conditions for the cats and dangerous situations for the public
- Some exhibitors profit from “cub petting” schemes in which patrons can pay for the chance to handle and take photos with tiger cubs
 - This is detrimental to the welfare of the cubs
 - Cub petting promotes unregulated breeding for more tiger cubs
 - Cub petting undermines real conservation efforts by funneling funds away from legitimate tiger conservation initiatives and misleads the public
- When the cubs grow too large for photos, their fate becomes unknown
 - Some may be sold to private individuals
 - There has even been evidence suggesting the tigers may enter the illegal trade