

National Survey: Support For Animals In Circuses

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National Survey Reveals Strong Opposition to Circus Elephant Bans and Overwhelming Support for Animals in Circuses

WASHINGTON, D.C. - 6/12/2000 - Eighty percent of Americans think animals should be part of the circus, and a majority said they believe there is already enough regulation to protect the health and welfare of circus animals, according to a recent national survey.

On June 13, Congress will consider House Resolution 2929, "The Captive Elephant Accident Prevention Act of 1999," which has been pushed by animal activists and would prevent circuses from traveling with and presenting elephants.

"This legislation is a solution in search of a problem," said Joan Galvin, vice president of government relations for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey®. "Ringling Bros. has a perfect safety record in presenting animals to audiences all across the United States, and federal, state, and local laws and inspectors provide the necessary regulation regarding animal welfare."

According to the nationally representative survey, conducted by Market Facts, Inc. on behalf of Ringling Bros., Americans do not support such legislation, and Galvin believes that Congress should base policy making on the opinions of experts.

Bill Runs Counter to Elephant Welfare and Conservation

Contrary to what activists claim, H.R. 2929 could put the future of the Asian elephant in jeopardy by hurting education and elephant conservation efforts, according to elephant experts.

"All of our members are committed to providing elephant care at the highest professional level, and we support the responsible public display of elephants as a vitally important means of increasing public awareness of and concern for these animals in human care and in the wild," said David Hagan, president of the Elephant Managers Association.

"With the disappearance of wild habitat, we believe that elephants in captivity will be the key to the survival of their species," said Kari Johnson, who with her husband Gary, runs Perris, Calif.-based Have Trunk Will Travel, a performing elephant ranch that gives elephant rides and works with the film, television, and advertising industries. "This ban would end our breeding program, which has produced two baby elephants, and the research projects we participate in to help make elephants healthier here and in the wild."

These projects are funded with money the company makes from performances involving its eight Asian elephants, according to Johnson.

"Our animals are ambassadors for their entire species," Johnson said. "When a child gets close to or touches one of our elephants, it gives that child a personal experience they can draw on for the rest of their life when they think about elephants."

Public Sentiment, Circus Fans Oppose Needless Legislation

In the survey, 82 percent said they believe the circus is a wholesome and safe place to take children, and nearly two-thirds of respondents (63 percent) said they believe it is inappropriate for the government to legislate what forms of family entertainment are available. "Americans are very clear in their support for animals, and specifically elephants, in the circus," Galvin said.

Only 21 percent of survey participants said that they would be more likely to vote for politicians who support bans.

"If this legislation were passed, it would prevent future generations from growing up with the indelible memories of elephants in the circus that most people have today," said Irv Mohler, secretary-treasurer and a past president of the Circus Fans Association of America. "I just think it would be terrible to ban such a great American tradition."

About Some of the Organizations Opposed to H.R. 2929

Ringling Bros. has more than 100 years of experience working, living with, and presenting to the public a variety of animals including the Asian elephant. In 1995, Ringling Bros. created the multimillion-dollar Center for Elephant Conservation, a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to conservation, breeding, scientific study, and handling of endangered Asian elephants. Since creating the breeding program, Ringling Bros. has welcomed 10 Asian elephants into the world. Ringling Bros. also played a vital role in achieving passage of the 1997 Asian Elephant Conservation Act.

The Elephant Managers Association is an international nonprofit organization of professional elephant handlers, administrators, veterinarians, researchers, and elephant enthusiasts. The Association is dedicated to the welfare of the world's elephants through improved conservation, husbandry, research, education, and communication. The EMA collaborates with other professional groups and regulatory agencies to address matters relating to elephant care and management. Members, who are elephant managers in all environments, adhere to a Code of Professional Ethics and are committed to providing elephant care at the highest professional level.

Have Trunk Will Travel is a privately funded family business that provides performing elephants for rides, shows, special appearances and television and movie production work. As a member of the Species Survival Plan, Elephant Managers Association, and the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Have Trunk Will Travel is dedicated to the sharing of knowledge to benefit elephants in zoological and private facilities.

Consumers Speak Out In Support of Circus Elephants

The statistics below represent the opinions of 1,000 American adults, 18 years of age or older, surveyed in May 2000 by Market Facts, Inc. on behalf of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey®:

- Nearly 80 percent of the participants agreed that animals should be a part of circus performances (79.9 percent).
- 82.4 percent of the participants agreed that the circus is a wholesome and safe place to take children.
- More than 60 percent of the participants felt that it is inappropriate for the federal government to legislate the forms of family entertainment available in the United States.
- Additionally, less than 30 percent of respondents believe that current government regulations are not enough to protect the health and welfare of circus animals.
- Only 20.7 percent of participants said that they would be more likely to vote for their federal congressional representative if s/he supported proposed bans on circus elephants.
- Eighty percent of the participants are registered voters.