



United States Association of Reptile Keepers
PO Box 279
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May 20, 2009

The Honorable Madeline Bordallo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Bordallo,

The United States Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK) is a science and education based advocacy organization which promotes the responsible private ownership of and trade in reptiles. Our goal is to facilitate cooperation between government agencies, the scientific community, and the private sector in order to produce policy proposals that will effectively address important husbandry and conservation issues. The health of these animals, public safety, and maintaining ecological integrity are our primary concerns.

Since the introduction of H.R. 669, the Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act, USARK has endeavored to make our voice heard as an active participant in the vetting process of the bill. We concur with the views and concerns expressed in the 62 page report of the Multi-stakeholder workshop on H.R. 669 held in March which included the participation of the majority staff of the Subcommittee.

USARK believes that as currently written, H.R. 669 poses a serious threat to thousands of family owned businesses engaged in the reptile industry. As a demonstration of that concern, USARK coordinated a grassroots campaign involving our members and supporters of the reptile industry. As a result, we delivered over 49,000 letters, plus thousands of telephone calls to you and Members of the Subcommittee, expressing our concerns about the potential impact of this legislation to the reptile industry.

While we appreciate the views expressed at the April 23 hearing of the Subcommittee and acknowledge your statement, "changes will be needed to address various concerns before any legislation moves forward" our concerns remain. In fact, we wish to echo the sentiments expressed in the April 30 letter addressed to you from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. USARK shares the apprehension on issues including; the preemptive ban on species until proven safe, user fees, and unrealistic compliance deadlines on a system which is already overburdened.

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We believe H.R. 669 is a fatally flawed bill that cannot be supported and should be abandoned. USARK would then welcome the opportunity to address, directly with you, the serious and shared underlying concern of invasive species and their impacts on non-native eco-systems.

We recognize and appreciate the potential harm posed by nonnative species and your personal interest in this issue. As our mission statement suggests, public safety, and maintaining ecological integrity are among our primary concerns.

Chairwoman Bordallo, we thank you for your leadership on this legislation and we look forward to working with you to facilitate a mutually agreeable resolution on a bill that will achieve its intended purpose.

Thank you for your consideration and we appreciate your reply.

Sincerely,

Andrew Wyatt
President, USARK

CC. Members for the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans, and Wildlife.