



TROY BALDERSON
STATE SENATOR
20TH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES:

Agriculture & Natural Resources.....Member
Energy & Public Utilities.....Vice-Chairman
Health, Human Services & Aging.....Member
Highways & Transportation.....Member

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

TO: All Senators
FROM: Senator Troy Balderson
DATE: February 3, 2012
SUBJECT: Co-Sponsor Request

I will soon be introducing legislation to regulate the ownership of certain wild and dangerous animals in Ohio.

Currently, Ohio has no regulations pertaining to the ownership of dangerous, wild animals. While the United States Department of Agriculture issues a license for these types of (primarily) non-native, dangerous species, that license is only issued if the owner intends to breed or exhibit the animal(s). **In short, if you own the animal only as a pet, then there is no required license in Ohio.**

In addition, if a USDA license is revoked (example: for non-compliance), then most likely, the owner will simply revert to being a private owner with no further consequences. For example, Terry Thompson (who released the animals in Zanesville), was once in possession of a USDA license to exhibit and breed dangerous, wild animals. However, when that license was revoked for violations, his animals simply became reclassified as pets.

In recognizing this dangerous hole in our regulatory system, it is absolutely imperative that we develop legislation that would carefully regulate the ownership of these animals. For the safety of our citizens and the animals, our regulations must ensure that the horror inflicted on my neighbors and constituents in Zanesville never happens in Ohio again. In addition, Ohio now has the opportunity to show leadership on this issue by developing carefully-planned legislation to address this problem.

This legislation is designed to be a common-sense initiative that will keep the public and our animals safe. The legislation would immediately ban individuals from acquiring additional wild and dangerous animals. Under this bill, the existing ownership of large carnivores (Lions, Tigers, and Bears), other large animals such as Elephants and

**OHIO SENATE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 041 · 1 CAPITOL SQUARE · COLUMBUS, OHIO
43215**

EMAIL: SD20@SENATE.STATE.OH.US · PHONE: (614)466-8076

Hippopotamuses, and certain dangerous reptiles such as Komodo Dragons and Crocodiles would be banned on January 1, 2014 except under limited conditions:

- Accredited Zoos (under the standards of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums or the Zoological Association of America)
- Private Shelters (current owners who meet the new standards to be developed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture)
- Sanctuaries
- Research facilities
- Circuses

In addition, this bill would also ban the public (except the facilities above) from purchasing non-human primates. However, individuals who currently own (certain) non-human primates would be permitted to retain their animal(s) so long as they could meet the safety, caging, and care standards outlined in the bill.

Lastly, this bill will put into place some basic standards, primarily based on the recommendations of the Zoological Association of America, to regulate the breeding, ownership, and sale of constricting and venomous snakes while also ensuring that the public is safe and the animals are cared for properly. This portion of the bill to maintain, breed and acquire new snakes.

Over the course of the last few months, my staff and I have held countless meetings with animal owners and advocates as well as those concerned with animal rights. While there are legitimate, law-abiding citizens that care for their animals in a responsible way, it is clear that action is needed to prevent future tragedies from occurring in our state. My desire in drafting this legislation is to find a proper and legal balance between allowing our citizens to retain their personal property and fulfilling our obligation to protect our citizens from undue danger.

I hope that you will join me in co-sponsoring this important legislation.

Due to the urgency of this request, if you would like to co-sponsor this legislation or if you have any questions, please contact my Legislative Aide, Joshua Eck at joshua.eck@senate.state.oh.us or (614) 466-8076 by **Monday, February 6, 2012 at 4:30pm.**