

USARK Legislative Talking Points and Tools

Economic Impact Points

1. From 1994 to 2008, the number of U.S. households that own a reptile rose from 2.8 million to 4.7 million, an increase of 68%. (GES Report at 3).
2. In 2010, 4.7 million U.S. households owned 13.6 million pet reptiles. (GES Report at 12).
3. The U.S. reptile industry has grown rapidly, driven primarily by small American businesses, few of which existed 30 years ago. (GES Report at 65).
4. The U.S. reptile industry today encompasses a vast number of participants including pet owners, hobbyists, breeders, importers, exporters, wholesalers, pet store proprietors, pet show promoters, entertainers, zoos, museums, veterinarians, manufacturers of reptile food and ancillary care products, and computer, internet, and publishing entities. (GES Report at 44)
5. The U.S. reptile industry generates annual revenues of approximately \$1.4 billion. (GES Report at 69).
6. Breeders have transformed reptile husbandry from a hobby to a viable profession which has created jobs in the U.S.
7. Both “morphs” (reptiles with atypical colorations such as albino) and wild-type reptiles attract interest in expanding domestic and international consumer markets.
8. Banning or heavily permitting reptiles will result in substantial revenue loss to small businesses and will drive many to bankruptcy.
9. The reptile industry has added tens of thousands of jobs in America over the last 30 years and regulations are now removing jobs from Americans.
10. Larger reptile product manufacturers and breeding facilities employ nearly 100 workers each. There are multiple manufacturers and breeding facilities this size in the U.S.
11. Simply the threat of future anti-reptile legislation has a harsh impact on the reptile industry. Sales are severely decreased as purchased animals may require permits or be banned, which makes a legally purchased reptile more expensive, or even illegal, to own.
12. Huge percentage annual growth seen in the reptile industry from the 1990s-2007 has been greatly slowed, if not halted, by new reptile legislation. New reptile legislation is a job killer in the U.S. and is also preventing the reptile industry from creating new jobs.
13. Reptile bans have a dramatic trickle-down effect on the entire pet industry.
 - a. If a reptile is banned or threatened as banned it eliminates the following sales:
 - i. Initial live reptile sale
 - ii. Initial caging and supplies for the reptile
 - iii. Future larger caging sales
 - iv. Future consumable product sales (i.e. bedding, light bulbs, etc.)
 - v. Weekly visits for reptile food (pet shops and grocery stores affected)
 - vi. Most reptile keepers have more than one reptile so a ban would eliminate future repeated sales of all above items
14. Many reptile breeders have more than \$100,000 invested in reptiles and caging with plans to make reptile breeding a full-time job. The threat of bans has slowed live reptile sales and made these plans impossible for many.
 - a. **Case:** A 2013 introduced reptile ban in Wilson County, Texas would have destroyed years of hard work and huge monetary investment by Jason and Cassandra Royer to make reptile breeding a full-time career.

15. State legislation decreases revenue as interstate commerce is a large portion of reptile sales.
16. There has been a huge increase in reptile captive breeding programs over the last 30 years and the vast majority of reptiles sold in the U.S. are born and bred in this country.
17. U.S. small businesses dominate the global reptile industry.
18. In 2009, 11.3 million live reptiles were exported from the United States, while only 900,000 live reptiles were imported into the United States. (USFWS LEMIS data)
19. The U.S. reptile industry generates revenue by exporting reptiles. Many of these reptiles are very valuable and are purchased by breeders in other countries.
20. Reptile shows attract millions of attendees annually and some reptile shows attract over 10,000 paying attendees in one weekend.
21. Reptile shows generate revenue for local restaurants, hotels and other businesses.
22. Many reptiles are valued well over \$1,000 each, with some reaching values over \$10,000.
23. STATISTICS to use and illustrate the size and importance of the reptile industry:
 - a. Find the reptile industry's estimated annual revenue for your state on pages 4-5
 - b. Find number of households with reptiles as pets for your state on pages 4-5
 - c. Use these to illustrate the large size and contributions of the reptile industry
 - a) Revenue
 - b) Taxes
 - c) Voters
 - d) Affected number of citizens

Environmental Impact Points

1. Exotic reptiles have extremely specific requirements to live.
2. Exotic reptiles cannot thrive in the U.S.
3. The only widely documented case of any "invasive reptile" is the Burmese python population in the Everglades.
 - a. Several animals escaped during Hurricane Andrew in 1992. After 21 years of living and breeding in the Everglades, only 68 snakes were captured during a 30 day effort by 1600 hunters. (FWC Python Challenge 2013 Press Release)
 - b. These pythons are not thriving, but are barely surviving in the most tropical environment of the U.S. (Florida Python Challenge held Jan. 12-Feb. 10, 2013).
4. Exotic reptiles must have suitable temperatures, humidity, habitat and prey items to live and the U.S. does not provide a suitable environment.
5. Exotic reptiles need additional suitable conditions to successfully breed.
6. Nighttime temperatures below 50° F for just a few nights will eradicate almost all species of exotic reptiles.
7. Temperatures below 32° F for just one night will kill all exotic, tropical reptiles.
8. With an estimated 13.6 million reptiles living in American households, if these animals could become invasive, there would be invasive reptiles across the U.S.
9. Native predators would prey upon exotic species well before the exotic species acclimated to new habitats.

10. Banning reptiles as pets is actually destructive to our environment as it removes a connection between people and animals, which leads to decreased environmental conservation efforts.
11. A portion of ticket sales from many reptile shows are donated to benefit conservation efforts.

Societal Impacts

1. Banning reptiles has severe impacts on our society.
2. Reptiles are becoming mainstream pets as people do not have time, space or funds to properly care for dogs and cats.
3. An estimated 5% of U.S. households have pet reptiles.
4. Anti-pet groups raise hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue and they are changing public policy through lobbying and political pressure.
5. Responsible pet owners cannot take time off work to fight constant anti-pet legislation being forced by anti-pet groups.
6. Collective punishment (punishing the whole due to a few) has been historically proven as ineffective and unconstitutional.
7. Reptile keepers have emotional bonds with their reptiles, just as owners of dogs and cats do.
8. Reptiles are suitable alternative pets for people with allergies to dogs, cats and small mammals.
9. Reptiles are extremely misunderstood animals and do not pose a threat to society.
10. Many reptiles could be considered “domesticated pets” as they have been bred in captivity for decades.
11. Many breeders have invested over ten years in their reptile businesses that are now being destroyed by over-regulatory legislation.
12. The face of the herp (reptiles and amphibians collectively) community has greatly changed.
 - a. Many doctors, lawyers and other professionals now keep reptiles.
 - b. Reptile shows are filled with families bonding because of reptiles.
13. Some educational-only programs, such as Reptile Fest in Chicago, attract thousands of paying attendees in one weekend to learn about reptiles.
14. Nationwide, educational programs reach hundreds of thousands of people annually.
15. These educational programs will not be possible if anti-reptile legislation continues and will remove the opportunity for people to learn about reptiles and become aware of conservation issues.
16. There are no documented cases of a member of the general public being killed by a constricting snake.
17. Pet owners are losing freedoms at an incredible rate due to the lobbying power of special interest groups that can invest millions to change public policy and force special interest agendas upon all citizens.

General Points and Statistics

1. There is already sufficient reptile legislation in place:
 - a. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) already protect endangered and threatened species of herps (reptiles and amphibians collectively).
 - b. The Lacey Act prohibits the purchase, transport and trade of wildlife taken in violation of any law of the United States or any foreign country.
 - c. Federal, state and local laws already regulate reptiles.
2. Snakes are the rising primary driver of the recent growth of the reptile market. (GES Report at 49)
3. Over-regulation is severely damaging the reptile industry and America's economy.
4. Only 10 reported deaths between 1990-2012 from large constrictor snakes
 - a. At least one of these reports is documented as fraudulent
 - b. No member of the general public has ever been killed by a large snake
 - c. Estimated .45 deaths per year from large constricting snakes
5. Deaths per year by:
 - a. Large snakes: .45
 - b. Vending machines: 13
 - c. Falling from bed: 450

Annual Reptile Industry Revenue and Reptile Pet Households by State

Pop. Rank In July 2012	State	Reptile Industry Annual Revenue	Households w/ Pet Reptiles
1	California	\$166,740,000	559,770
2	Texas	\$112,560,000	377,880
3	New York	\$86,660,000	290,930
4	Florida	\$84,140,000	282,470
5	Illinois	\$57,400,000	192,700
6	Pennsylvania	\$56,840,000	190,820
7	Ohio	\$51,660,000	173,430
8	Georgia	\$43,400,000	145,700
9	Michigan	\$44,240,000	148,520
10	North Carolina	\$42,700,000	143,350
11	New Jersey	\$39,340,000	132,070
12	Virginia	\$35,840,000	120,320
13	Washington	\$30,100,000	101,050
14	Massachusetts	\$28,560,000	95,880
15	Arizona	\$28,560,000	95,880
16	Indiana	\$28,980,000	97,290
17	Tennessee	\$28,420,000	95,410
18	Missouri	\$26,740,000	89,770
19	Maryland	\$25,900,000	86,950

20	Wisconsin	\$25,480,000	85,540
21	Minnesota	\$23,800,000	79,900
22	Colorado	\$22,540,000	75,670
23	Alabama	\$21,420,000	71,910
24	South Carolina	\$20,720,000	69,560
25	Louisiana	\$20,300,000	68,150
26	Kentucky	\$19,460,000	65,330
27	Oregon	\$17,080,000	57,340
28	Oklahoma	\$16,800,000	56,400
29	Connecticut	\$15,960,000	53,580
30	Iowa	\$13,580,000	45,590
31	Mississippi	\$13,300,000	44,650
32	Arkansas	\$13,020,000	43,710
33	Kansas	\$12,740,000	42,770
34	Utah	\$12,320,000	41,360
35	Nevada	\$12,040,000	40,420
36	New Mexico	\$9,240,000	31,020
37	Nebraska	\$8,120,000	27,260
38	West Virginia	\$8,260,000	27,730
39	Idaho	\$7,140,000	23,970
40	Hawaii	\$6,020,000	20,210
41	Maine	\$5,880,000	19,740
42	New Hampshire	\$5,880,000	19,740
43	Rhode Island	\$4,760,000	15,980
44	Montana	\$4,480,000	15,040
45	Delaware	\$4,060,000	13,630
46	South Dakota	\$3,640,000	12,220
47	Alaska	\$3,220,000	10,810
48	North Dakota	\$2,940,000	9,870
49	Vermont	\$2,800,000	9,400
50	Wyoming	\$2,520,000	8,460

*Revenue statistics are based upon \$1,400,000,000 generated by the reptile industry in the U.S. in 2010 (via 2011 study done by Georgetown Economic Services, LLC)

*Household statistics based upon 4,700,000 households in the U.S. with pet reptiles in 2010 (via 2011 study done by Georgetown Economic Services, LLC)