

Blumenauer's Captive Primate Safety Act will protect American communities

Washington, DC – Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed, H.R. 80, The Captive Primate Safety Act. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) is the sponsor of this bill that would amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to add primates to the list of animals that cannot be transported across state lines by individuals.

“Make no mistake, this bill will protect our communities and ensure the welfare of these animals,” said Rep. Blumenauer. “The horrific chimpanzee attack in Connecticut last week brought a renewed urgency to this issue and I am pleased with today’s long over due passage of this bill. Primates are wild animals and should not be regularly transported around the United States and integrated into our communities or our households. Today we have taken an important step toward the welfare of humans and animals.

Although the importation of primates into the United States for the pet trade has been banned by Federal regulation since 1975, these animals are bred in the United States and are readily available for purchase from exotic animal dealers and even over the Internet. Because of the importation laws, there remains an active domestic trade in these animals. Up to 400 chimpanzees are kept as pets in the United States. Primates can carry diseases such as herpes B and tuberculosis and these risks are increased by interstate transport of the animals. Currently, twenty states prohibit keeping primates as pets, and many others require a permit. Even in states where it is legal to keep primates, most people cannot provide the special care, housing, and social structure these animals require.

This bill provides the appropriate federal response to complement state and local laws by amending the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981. The bill targets the pet trade and does not affect trade or transportation of animals between zoos, research facilities, or other federally licensed and regulated entities. It is similar to the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, which Congress passed unanimously in 2003 to ban interstate commerce in lions, tigers, and other big cats for the pet trade.

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The “Captive Primate Safety Act” received strong support from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, The Humane Society of the United States, BornFree USA and many other organizations in the 110th Congress. Renowned primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall urged passage at a hearing, saying: “In doing so, you will be promoting public health and safety, as well as taking a reasonable and sound step toward protecting these amazing wild creatures.”

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