



July 28, 2009

Honorable John Conyers
Chair
Committee on Judiciary
United States House of Representatives

Honorable Lamar Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Judiciary
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Conyers and Ranking Member Smith:

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) wishes to convey its opposition to H.R. 2811, which proposes to establish a prohibition under the Lacey Act against the importation or interstate movement of “the constrictor snake of the species Python genera.” As the largest pet trade association in the United States, PIJAC represents importers, exporters, breeders, distributors and wholesale and retail sellers of companion animals and related pet products, as well as advocating for the rights of the hundreds of millions of Americans who own pets.

Although this legislation is intended to curb the spread of Burmese Pythons in Florida’s Everglades, the language of the bill encompasses far more than this single species. Indeed, as crafted, the measure would impose a ban on all pythons. Yet, these other species do not possess the characteristics that led to current concerns about the Burmese. The Ball Python, much more popular among pet owners, does not possess the same growth potential or represent the same threat as the Burmese. Other species of pythons, popular among hobbyists and reptile aficionados, would likewise be impacted by the ban.

The Lacey Act sets forth a statutory process for the listing of species in which the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is charged with evaluating potentially injurious species through a science-based risk analysis. We respectfully urge the Congress not to rush to judgment, thereby defeating the very purpose of this risk assessment process, which is even now being employed by the Service relative to the Burmese Python. Instead, Congress should look to states such as Florida and Texas which have created regulatory mechanisms for possession of specified species of concern such as large

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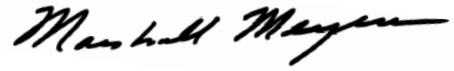
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constrictors. These mechanisms facilitate orderly movement of animals without relying on Lacey Act restrictions. Unintended consequences of a wholesale ban are likely to include the release of untold numbers of animals into the wild, as well as driving trade underground. While PIJAC well understands the positive intentions behind H.R. 2811, it is the wrong way to handle a legitimate concern. We look forward to working with this committee on an effective response that better targets this concern.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marshall Meyers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Marshall Meyers
CEO and General Counsel

C: Honorable Members of the Committee on Judiciary