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## HSUS Applauds State Senator Connie Sipes for Introducing Bill to Prohibit Private Possession of Wild Animals in Indiana

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WASHINGTON – Indiana State Senator Connie Sipes (D-New Albany) introduced legislation (SB 482) this week to protect public safety by prohibiting the private possession of certain wild and dangerous animals in the state. People who already have these animals would be able to keep them by getting a permit from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

"Wild animals kept in untrained hands in our communities pose a serious threat to Indiana residents," said Senator Sipes. "My constituents are very concerned about the proliferation of exotic pets. They want action now. Wild animals belong in the wild, not in our backyards."

"The Humane Society of the United States applauds Senator Sipes for her leadership in protecting public safety and promoting animal welfare," said Michael Markarian, executive vice president of The HSUS. "It is extremely difficult to meet the needs of wild animals in captivity. All too often, people get them as infants and when they grow too large and aggressive to handle, there is no place for them to go. They may end up confined to small cages, passed from owner to owner, or let loose."

The bill targets the pet trade and substandard roadside facilities and would have no impact on accredited zoos, circuses and research facilities.

David Hall, Director of New Albany-Floyd County Animal Control and Shelter, added. "This legislation will protect law enforcement officials who can't predict what animals they might encounter today. Placing wild animals when they come into the shelter shouldn't be the answer; it's better if people don't get them as pets in the first place."

The legislation builds on Indiana's regulatory structure. Currently, a DNR permit is required to keep certain wild animals as pets in Indiana, specifically wild cats such as lions, tigers and servals; wolves; bears; alligators at least five feet long; and venomous snakes. SB 482 will expand the list of regulated animals to include large constrictor snakes, crocodiles, chimpanzees, monkeys and other dangerous wild animals, and will prohibit private possession of these animals. In addition, it will expand the list of regulated entities to include those licensed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The consequences of the trade in exotic animals can be deadly. In September, a man was killed by his pet reticulated python in Harrison County. Nationwide, at least 18 people have been killed by captive exotic animals in the past five years, and many more have been injured.

This month a cougar escaped from a USDA-licensed facility in Clay County, and in 2004 a pet cougar escaped from a car after a crash in Allen County. A 4 ½ foot long alligator was found in a pond in Johnson County in 2005, and an alligator who had become too much to handle was dropped off at an Elkhart shelter in September.

*The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization with nearly 10 million members and constituents. The HSUS is a mainstream voice for animals, with active programs in companion animals, disaster preparedness and response, wildlife and habitat protection, marine mammals, animals in research, equine protection, and farm animal welfare. The HSUS protects all animals through education, investigation, litigation, legislation, advocacy and field work. The nonprofit organization is based in Washington and has field representatives and offices across the country.*

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