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SMALL & RURAL LAW ENFORCEMENT EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATION

The Honorable Michael B. Quigley
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Brian K. Fitzpatrick
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Quigley and Fitzpatrick,

I am writing on behalf of the members of The Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association in strong support for H.R. 263, the "Big Cat Public Safety Act."

The Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association is the only 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated solely to supporting and promoting law enforcement executives and agencies that serve small, rural & tribal communities. Small and rural law enforcement make up over 90% of enforcement agencies nationwide.

There is an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 big cats (tigers, lions, etc.) owned as pets or maintained in inadequate roadside zoos in the United States. Exotic animals in people's homes and backyards pose a significant safety risk to the public as well as enforcement officers who must come face-to-face with these dangerous animals when they escape or attack humans. Additionally, many of these big cats are housed in dilapidated structures that are unlikely to contain them during natural disasters.

Many Americans envision law enforcement departments as big organizations with large numbers of officers, but small communities have a significantly reduced budget and therefore less funding for personnel, training, equipment, and other needed resources required to maintain public safety. These officers are not provided the training or resources to respond to extremely high-risk, and entirely preventable, incidents when owners are unable to control their dangerous big cats.

Passing the Big Cat Public Safety Act would ensure that big cats are kept only in licensed, secure facilities that can properly care for them. This bill is in the best interest of small and rural enforcement agencies and we look forward to its passage.

Kind Regards,

Sheriff Michael Brown, ret.

President, Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association

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