

Animal Welfare Institute * American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals * Animal Legal Defense Fund * Animal Protection League of New Jersey * Bear Education and Resource Program * Born Free USA * California Wolf Center * Cascades Raptor Center * Center for Biological Diversity * Center for Food Safety * Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center * Coyote Watch Canada * Earth Island Institute * Endangered Species Coalition * Environmental Protection Information Center * Footloose Montana * Friends of the Earth * Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf * Georgia Animal Rights and Protection * In Defense of Animals * International Fund for Animal Welfare * Klamath Forest Alliance * Humane Society Legislative Fund * The Humane Society of the United States * League of Humane Voters, Florida * League of Humane Voters, Georgia * League of Humane Voters, New Jersey * League of Humane Voters, Ohio * Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals * National Wolfwatcher Coalition * National Urban Wildlife Coalition * Natural Resources Defense Council * The North American Wolf Foundation * Predator Defense * Project Coyote * Sierra Club * Trap Free Montana Public Lands * Western Nebraska Resources Council * Western Wildlife Conservancy * WildEarth Guardians * Wildlife Public Trust & Coexistence * Wisconsin Wolf Front * Wolf Conservation Center * Wolf Conservation PAC * Wolf Haven International * The Wolf Mountain Nature Center * Wyoming Untrapped

RE: Support the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act (S. 1081)

May 6, 2015

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we are writing to express our strong support for the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act (S. 1081), sponsored by Senator Cory Booker, to prohibit the use of body-gripping traps within the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). We appreciate the Committee's consideration of this legislation and encourage swift action on this important and necessary bill.

The NWRS is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and attracts more than 47 million visitors each year. National wildlife refuges are intended to be safe havens for wildlife, but over half of our nation's 563 wildlife refuges allow trapping on these public lands, posing a safety risk for humans and animals alike. Millions of Americans visit refuges each year to hike on trails and observe a wide range of wildlife species in their natural habitats. According to the

FWS, most wildlife refuges are in or near urban areas, with “at least one wildlife refuge ... within an hour’s drive of most major cities and more than 260 wildlife refuges ... near smaller cities.”

All visitors should be able to enjoy our national wildlife refuges without fear that they or their pets may stumble upon a body-gripping trap or encounter an injured animal languishing in these gruesome devices. Body-gripping traps—such as strangling snares, Conibear traps, and steel-jaw leghold traps—are inhumane and inherently nonselective. These archaic traps indiscriminately injure and kill countless nontarget animals, including endangered and threatened species, and even household pets.

Jawed traps slam closed with bone-crushing force on any animal that trips the device, while strangling snares tighten around the neck or body of their victims. Steel-jaw leghold traps are among the most notorious trapping devices. Over 88 countries have banned their use, but—astonishingly—these and other cruel traps are still allowed in the United States on federal lands intended to protect and conserve our nation’s wildlife. Put simply, this cruelty should not be permitted in any place that is called a “refuge.”

The NWRS contains one of the most diverse collections of fish and wildlife habitats in the world and provides a home for more than 240 endangered species. The NWRS’s stated mission is “to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.” Trapping is not considered a priority wildlife-dependent public use of the NWRS (as per the 1997 Refuge Improvement Act). By law, the Secretary of the Interior is charged with ensuring the “biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health” of the NWRS, in addition to providing for the conservation of fish and wildlife. Importantly, the Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act still allows the FWS to engage in population management goals, as all other trapping methods, including cage and box traps, can still be used to remove or relocate animals.

A national Decision Research public opinion poll showed that 79 percent of Americans believe trapping on national wildlife refuges should be prohibited, while 88 percent believe wildlife and habitat preservation should be the highest priority of the refuge system.

Thank you for allowing this bill time before the Committee. The Refuge from Cruel Trapping Act (S. 1081) is a crucial step toward fulfilling the wishes of the American public on this matter and reducing the suffering inflicted on our nation’s wildlife.

Sincerely,

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CC: Members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee