

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write today to express concern regarding the health and welfare of Nosey, a wild-caught female African circus elephant exhibited by Mr. Hugo Liebel (license number 58-C-0288). Nosey has reportedly undergone long-term abuse and has suffered serious, willful, and chronic violations of the Animal Welfare Act with repeated noncompliance with the regulations and standards governing veterinary care, handling, housing, and husbandry. We are concerned that USDA's evaluations of Nosey are insufficient and necessitate a follow-up examination to determine if confiscation is warranted under the Animal Welfare Act.

We understand that USDA officials evaluated Nosey on November 7, 2014 and January 17, 2015 and reported no findings of lameness or abnormalities that would interfere with normal function. However, we believe there is evidence to demonstrate the USDA's interpretation of both examinations to have been insufficient to fully evaluate Nosey's health and that further in- depth and ongoing comprehensive examinations are necessary.

Dr. Philip Ensley, a veterinarian with over thirty years of clinical experience in zoo and wild animal medicine, conducted an independent review of Nosey in March 2014 and other site visits through 2015. In a letter to your office in October, he argued that the USDA failed in its evaluations to recognize and report arthritis and progressive osteoarthritis, often referred to as degenerative joint disease. In site visits through 2015, he found Nosey to be in an "expressionless, dazed stupor...and in a state of mental numbness or psychological deterioration" and found evidence of foot and musculoskeletal problems, among other health issues. During the November 7, 2014 examination, Nosey's gait was also not observed with the howdah on, or under the weight of people, "a considerable oversight in diagnostics" according to CompassionWorks International. If her current standard of care is perpetuated, Nosey's health will progressively worsen.

As Members of Congress, we must continue to advocate for the humane treatment of animals and protect all animals, large or small, domestic or wild, from mistreatment. Most importantly, we have a responsibility to treat all animals with kindness and respect. Therefore, we urge you to act swiftly to address this issue and look forward to collaborating with your office.

Sincerely


Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress


Earl Blumenthal
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



John Conyers Jr.
Member of Congress



John Delaney
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



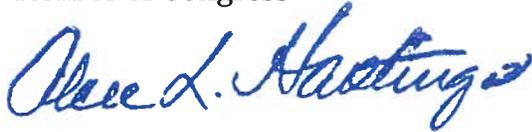
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Alan Grayson
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



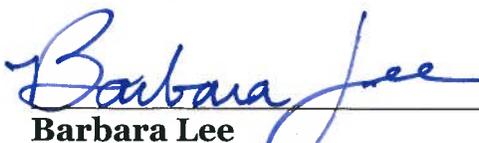
Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress



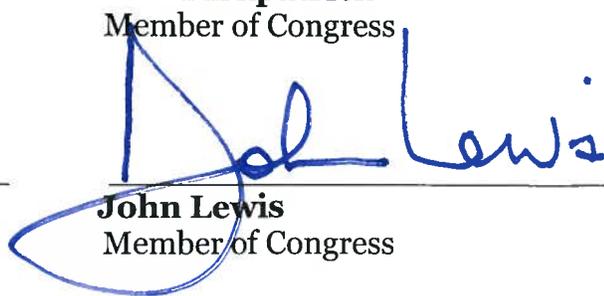
Hank Johnson
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



John Lewis
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu

Ted Lieu
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Martha McSally

Martha McSally
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler

Jerrold Nadler
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Lucille Roybal-Allard
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Janice D. Schakowsky

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Member of Congress

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Paul D. Tonko
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Juan Vargas
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