



## SB 313 – Circus Cruelty Prevention Act

### Summary

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SB 313 protects any animal, except domestic dogs, cats, or horses by prohibiting any person from sponsoring, conducting, operating, or participating in a circus that uses a such animal.

### Background

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Circuses travel nearly year-round, in all weather extremes, sometimes for days at a time. While in transit, the animals are confined to trailers or trucks, where they may not have access to basic necessities, such as food, water, and veterinary care. Elephants are chained, and big cats are imprisoned in cramped, filthy cages, in which they eat, drink, sleep, defecate, and urinate—all in the same place. And there's no relief once the animals reach a venue, where they remain caged and are chained in arena basements and parking lots.

Bears, tigers, elephants, and other animals exploited in traveling acts don't ride bicycles, jump through hoops, or balance on pedestals because they want to. They perform these and other difficult tricks because they're afraid of what will happen if they don't. To force animals to perform, circus trainers abuse them with whips, muzzles, electric prods, bullhooks (heavy batons with a sharp steel hook on one end that are illegal in California), and other weapons that cause them pain.

### Why this bill is needed

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Government oversight of training methods is virtually non-existent. Circuses are transient. They move quickly from city to city and easily evade law enforcement. Local animal control officers typically lack the specialized knowledge and training needed to recognize an ailing animal and the resources and expertise needed to take action.

Public demand for cruelty-free circuses continues to grow. Animals also pose an inordinate danger to public safety. If they feel threatened or frightened, they will act on their natural instincts—and when a bear, a big cat, or an elephant rebels, trainers can't always protect themselves or the public.

SB 313 applies to all animals other than domestic cats, dogs, and horses. Wild animals are innately driven to behave as they would in their natural homes—the rich ecosystems in which their species evolved over millennia. When they're denied any semblance of a natural life, they suffer physically and psychologically.

This measure recognizes both the animal welfare concerns and public safety concerns of circuses that force animals to perform. Any person that violates the provisions of this section, or any rule or regulation promulgated pursuant thereto, shall be fined a civil penalty not to exceed twenty-five thousand dollars for each violation.

### Sponsor

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Social Compassion in Legislation (Sponsor)

### Staff Contact

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