

Make Friends With Congress to Make Progress for Animals

by Julia Janak
Grassroots Advocacy Manager

Have you ever wondered how to better cultivate your relationship with Congress? I recently conducted a series of interviews with Congressional staff members which revealed ways you, as members of the public, can help advance animal protection legislation.

One Chief of Staff in the House of Representatives told us: "The staff relies a great deal on constituents to bring new bills to their attention so they can in turn make the congressman aware of the issue."

You play one of the most important roles in our democracy as a "Constituent." That means members of Congress are paid to listen to you! Sending a well-informed and timely

message to Congress is one of the most important things you can do to help animals. One Congressional office we surveyed told us, "Animal protection issues rank as one of the number one concerns of our constituents."

Since the 2001 anthrax scare, Congress has become increasingly reliant on email. Members of Congress are hearing from more constituents, more frequently, on a variety of issues. It is not uncommon for some staffers to receive several hundred email messages a day. Luckily, all the staff members we spoke with encourage constituents to contact them via email. They suggested that you keep the emails brief and, if possible, follow up with a phone call. When you wish to register

an opinion regarding a specific vote, one Senate office recommended a phone call rather than email. Keep in mind that all constituent letters and emails are guaranteed a prompt response.

I've also learned that many Congressional offices have an "open door policy" to encourage constituents to visit in person. Several Congressional offices expressed dismay that constituents do not take better advantage of this opportunity. For substantive issues especially, a meeting gives you time to explain the finer points of either pending legislation that needs their support or bring to their attention the details of a new issue. A personal visit demonstrates your conviction, not to mention your credibility and trustworthiness.

Take advantage of this extraordinary access to legislators by scheduling an appointment with the district office nearest you. A face-to-face meeting can go a long way toward building a relationship of mutual trust and respect with your senators and representative.

We know many of you are personally involved with caring for animals, which often means that issues of animal treatment and welfare can bring out strong emotions. Please bear in mind our success depends on facts. It is important to keep emotions to a minimum in



Activist Recognition Program

DDAL thanks the newest members of our Activist Recognition Program for being a voice for the voiceless! Whether it's writing Congress about pending legislation, urging a government agency to pass new regulations, or publishing an editorial in their

local newspaper, these citizens have all put pen to paper to speak out for the animals. If you'd like to speak out for animals, but aren't sure how, contact the DDAL for suggestions.

Severa Aguero, NY
Harriet Baker, MA
Winifred Brand, MI
Ruth Campbell, NY
Carla Cicchi, CA
Janie Collins, FL
Chris Curle, FL

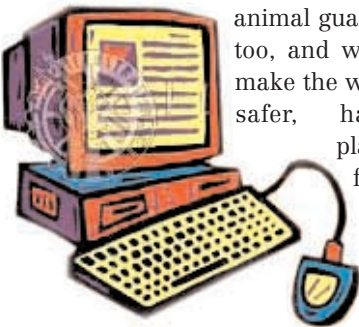
Judy Dynnik, MI
John Eberle, KY
Maureen Edgecomb, CA
Maureen Gagnani, CA
Jo Ann Guerin, VA
Thelma Harpole, NY
Jennifer Holmes, WI
Elizabeth Kantanen, IL
Virginia Klinkman, MI
Rose Lopresto, TX
Gloria Mack, NY
Connie Mazzeo, PA
Krissy McKenney, CA
Judith Murphy, MN

Paula Nichols, WA
Gina Oberfoell, MO
Colleen Rasher, CA
Darla Reddick, SD
Wilford Schuninan, NY
Karen Shea, VA
Jan Sieck, CO
Shirley Stubbins, PA
Ann Talley, VA
Philip Versage, FL
Patricia Willey, VA
Donna Worthington, AZ
Karen Wright, ME

order to present the most convincing case possible. Discussing animal welfare issues in a favorable light will help congressional Members look forward to working on animal-related issues. We've found that the facts surrounding animal welfare issues often speak for themselves.

Keeping constituents happy is one of the many reasons animal protection legislation gets introduced.

Often, Members are animal guardians too, and want to make the world a safer, happier place for animals.



Members may also be spurred to action as a result of a current event that tugs at his or her heart. The polar bears that languished in the Puerto Rican heat several years ago were the inspiration for the Polar Bear Protection Act of 2001. The unexplained animal deaths at the National Zoo have convinced Congress to investigate the welfare of zoo animals in our nation's capital. Sometimes an egregious act of animal cruelty committed in a Member's home state or district can spur that Member to action.

One Senate Chief of Staff admitted that the long hours required on Capitol Hill are worth it when she knows she has made a difference.



"Thank you's are awesome!" she told us. Whenever you hear your elected official has done something nice for animals, introduced a bill, become a co-sponsor or pushed for increased appropriations for animal related programs, be sure to drop a line and say, "Thanks for caring about animals." 🐾

Swaziland, continued from page 13

Congressman Sam Farr (D-CA), who has championed federal legislation to prohibit the use of elephants in circuses for this very reason, says that it is "simply cruel" to break up elephant families in Africa for captive display in the U.S. He also notes that it may be dangerous for the American livestock industry. Elephants can be carriers of foot and mouth disease (FMD), though they can not be readily tested for it and do not exhibit signs of affliction. Swaziland is not certified as being a nation free of the disease according to the Office of International des Epizooties, which is the competent body for such matters. In a May 9 letter to Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, Congressman Farr notes, "If these elephants are carriers of FMD and are permitted to come into the U.S., then the disease could spread to cattle and other cloven-hoofed animals, starting in California and Florida and spreading throughout the country with potentially disastrous consequences."

If this import were to ever proceed, the price would be great — for the individual animals who would suffer, for the conservation of the species in the wild, for humans and potentially for other industries. What is the incentive for

African governments and the African people to invest in local conservation of threatened and endangered species when those same animals easily could be sold off to the highest bidder?

Combined, the zoos have offered a paltry \$132,000 for these elephants. Meanwhile, they are also investing many millions of dollars to create tiny artificial homes for the elephants here. A fraction of that money could be spent more appropriately conserving elephants in Africa. Additional protected lands could be purchased to secure sufficient elephant habitat, extra fencing could be erected to avoid human-elephant conflicts, and park rangers who are vital wildlife law enforcement agents could be better equipped to protect these animals in their natural habitats from ruthless, well-armed poachers.

Resuming importation of African elephants for captivity in the U.S. sets a dangerous precedent: when zoos fail at breeding and maintaining elephants in captivity, they can merely supplant their dying captive animals with animals from a dangerously depleted wild population. African elephants hold the greatest value when they are left in the wild to roam free in the savannah, drink from a river, lake or forest pool,



The survival of the next generations are critical for the Swaziland elephants.

and wrestle or roll in the mud with their companions. The future survival of Africa's elephants rests in Africa, not in compounds on the fringes of America's urban sprawl. 🐾

AS WE GO TO PRESS: Despite overwhelming evidence against such a decision, on July 9, 2003, the Fish and Wildlife Service inexplicably decided once again to grant both zoos their permits to import these 11 elephants. A second lawsuit is underway.

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