

Bob Barker's letter to the North Carolina Standing Committee on Rules and Operations of the Senate follows.

February 14, 2013

The Honorable Tom Apodaca
Chair, Committee on Rules and Operations of the Senate
North Carolina State Senate

Dear Senator Apodaca,

As a lifelong Republican and one who deeply values our country's natural treasures, I'm writing to express profound concern over Senate Bill 60, also known by the offensive title "The Opossum Right-to-Work Act."

While I am sure that this bill was introduced as a laugh, a moment's reflection will show that it makes a mockery of the legislative process and epitomizes big-government interference by seeking to significantly amend a well-established state law and create a legal loophole to satisfy the petty interests of one man made unhappy by a judge's rightful ruling. The proposed amendment to the state's captivity-licensing statute, which, in its original form, is meant to *protect* native wild animals, is sponsored by Rep. Roger West, who also sponsors the annual New Year's Eve "Opossum Drop" at Clay Logan's gas station in Brasstown. For this cruel event, a wild opossum is trapped using dogs, held in unnatural surroundings for days or weeks, then placed in a Plexiglas box on New Year's Eve, hoisted above a stage, and subjected to a terrifying barrage of loud music, fireworks, and cannon and musket fire. Since the original captivity statute allows licenses to be issued for activities only in "the interests of humane treatment of wild animals," such as wildlife rehabilitation, West's attempt to carve out a loophole for this event is absurd, since no rational person could conclude that it is even remotely humane.

But the proposed legislation also presents a serious threat to North Carolina's wildlife that goes far beyond the scope of the Opossum Drop. It seeks essentially to strip the state's wild animals of crucial protections and make them vulnerable to a wide array of cruel practices, including being held indefinitely in captivity, being put on display to generate profit or publicity for their captors, and being exploited for any "other purpose." The bill even goes so far as to seek to exempt many citizens from the state's anti-cruelty law.

West's amendment also endangers public safety, since the legislation makes no provision at all for safeguarding residents from the potential threat of disease and other obvious dangers associated with transporting, keeping, and publicly exhibiting a wild animal.

North Carolina's citizens know that this type of legislation rightfully belongs to a bygone era, and they don't want to see the legislature move the state backwards by attempting to create loopholes for animal abuse. I hope to hear that you will oppose this bill, and I hope that clear heads will prevail so that this fine state can be proud of its legislative history. I can be reached through PETA's Michelle Cho at MichelleC@peta.org or 323-210-2204.

Sincerely,

Bob Barker