

## **Policy Proposal: Protecting Our Planet's Cohabitants**

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***Caring for the other species with whom we share the planet is the moral thing to do; more often than not, it is also in humans' self-interest. The famous maxim, "the greatness of a civilization can be judged by how it treats its weakest members" should be broadened to include how it treats its non-human coinhabitants.***

***First animal-related question: cats or dogs?***

The only right answer to that question is: yes.

***If you love animals so much, why aren't you a vegetarian?***

I am.

***I've heard you've made some pretty bold animal-related promises on the campaign trail.***

It is possible that I have suggested burying cheese in every yard and sprinkling catnip on every lamppost. Both suggestions got quite a number of tails wagging.

***Now on to the serious questions: we have so many issues facing our country, from healthcare to housing, and education to inflation, that I haven't really kept up with legislation related to animals. Catch me up on what's happening at the moment.***

Let's run through a few pieces of legislation that are pending and why they matter:

- Mink VIRUS Act: this bill would ban farming mink for their fur. It would also compensate fur farm owners whose operations would be affected.
  - o Mink – which are related to weasels – are a particular health risk to humans because they can carry and possibly transmit several respiratory viruses that also impact people (really, they can spread both human and animal respiratory viruses). For example, we've seen mink-to-human transmission of COVID-19;
  - o The animals themselves suffer extensively in overcrowded cages with no access to their natural habitat or behaviors – many incur stress-induced mutilation and injuries – before being killed for their fur;

- ***Two New York Democrats – Rep. Espaillat and Rep. Goldman – have sponsored or cosponsored this bill. Unlike Rep. Clarke, I would proudly be the third.***
- Captive Primate Safety Act: this bill would prohibit private ownership and interstate/foreign commerce of nonhuman primates for the pet trade.
  - Nonhuman primates cannot thrive in a residential context – neither their physical nor familial requirements could be met by even those who are well-intentioned;
  - These animals can also pose a threat to humans, with 300+ people injured over the last three decades by nonhuman primates held in private homes/facilities;
  - Nonhuman primates should not be pets and this bill would help eliminate the cruel practice;
  - ***Three New York Democrats – Rep. Meng, Rep. Nadler, and Rep. Latimer – have cosponsored this bill. Unlike Rep. Clarke, I would proudly be the fourth.***
- Pigs and Public Health Act: this bill would remove downed (nonambulatory) pigs from our food system by significantly reducing the number of downed pigs being slaughtered.
  - Downed pigs are pigs that cannot stand or walk unassisted – many are horribly abused to get them to slaughter; this bill would introduce enforceable standards of care for them;
  - It would also prohibit meat from sick pigs from entering the food system, thus protecting public health;
  - ***One New York Democrat – Rep. Nadler – has cosponsored this bill. Unlike Rep. Clarke, I would proudly be the second.***
- The Save Our Bacon Act: this bill would undermine states’ ability to enact their own laws regarding the treatment of farm animals.
  - For example, it would invalidate California’s Prop 12 and similar state laws designed to protect farm animals from extreme confinement;
  - More than a dozen states across the country currently have laws protected farm animals from extreme cruelty – all of which would be at risk of being overturned by this bill;
  - The bill specifically “could strip states and localities of their right to impose standards on the production of livestock products sold or offered for sale in

interstate commerce when those standards differ from the laws of other states”;

- ***I would unequivocally oppose this legislation and pressure other elected officials to do the same.***

***Americans have a responsibility to protect all those who are in need of assistance. That responsibility applies to more than just other humans. It applies to our planet, it applies to our surrounding environment, and it most certainly applies to the animals we live amongst.***



Sources include:

- <https://aldf.org/project/oppose-save-our-bacon-act/>
- <https://aldf.org/project/pigs-and-public-health-act-federal/>
- <https://aldf.org/project/mink-virus-act-federal/>
- <https://aldf.org/project/captive-primate-safety-act-federal/>