

BIG CAT PUBLIC SAFETY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 3, 2020

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, as an original sponsor and a senior Member of the House of Representatives, I rise in strong support of this bipartisan bill, H.R. 1380, the "Big Cat Public Safety Act", which ends the ownership of dangerous big cats as pets as well as prohibits exhibitors from allowing public contact with cubs.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Congressman MIKE QUIGLEY for his leadership on this legislation.

Across the country, thousands of big cats like tigers, lions, leopards, and pumas are kept in miserable, insecure, and unsafe conditions by irresponsible owners.

These animals often come from a vicious cycle of breeding perpetuated by unscrupulous facilities looking to make a profit off of "cub petting" or photo opportunities.

It is an issue that causes immeasurable animal suffering and introduces inexcusable threats to human safety.

Big cats are wild animals and undoubtedly suffer when kept as pets.

They are often purchased as babies, and private owners are typically unable to manage them once they are fully grown.

As a result, the animals are frequently left to languish in grossly inadequate conditions, often being deprived of sufficient space, adequate veterinary care, a nutritious diet, and enrichment.

Furthermore, it is common procedure for some roadside zoos to inhumanely separate babies from their mothers, so that they can charge the public to pet and play with the cubs.

This is a cruel and unhealthy practice that can cause not only lifelong psychological problems but also premature death for the cubs.

These young cats quickly outgrow their usefulness in the cub handling industry and most often end up being sent to substandard "zoos," sold into the exotic pet trade, or possibly even killed and sold for parts.

This vicious cycle of exploitation and constant breeding must be stopped.

Currently, state laws regarding private ownership of big cats are inconsistent, and some states have few or no laws regarding the keeping of big cats.

Madam Speaker, a uniform federal law is necessary to end this dangerous industry once and for all.

The "Big Cat Public Safety Act" is a simple and straightforward solution to the devastating and growing crisis of negligent big cat breeding and ownership.

According to Big Cat Rescue, there have been more than 700 dangerous incidents in the U.S. involving big cats since 1990.

These incidents include hundreds of human injuries, maulings, and deaths.

In many of these cases, the animals were shot and killed, often by first responders who are not equipped to deal with these situations, thereby also putting them in harm's way.

Throughout my tenure in Congress, I have been a staunch advocate for protecting endangered species.

Most recently, I introduced H.R. 4804, "the ProTECT Act", which amends the Endangered Species Act of 1973 in order to prohibit the taking for a trophy of any endangered or threatened species of fish or wildlife in the United States and the importation of endangered and threatened species trophies into the United States.

H.R. 4804 is an updated version of my bill from the 114th Congress, H.R. 3448, the "Cecil the Lion Endangered and Threatened Species Act of 2015".

I was in Africa when the iconic Cecil the Lion, was murdered for sport.

It was a disgraceful act that showcased a complete lack of respect for these wondrous animals, and it compelled me to fiercely advocate for the preservation of our wildlife across the world.

Madam Speaker, today we have an important opportunity to once again come together and protect endangered species by passing H.R. 1380, the "Big Cat Public Safety Act".

For the safety of our first responders, of our community, and for these majestic animals, we need this vital piece of legislation.

I am honored to be a leader on this issue, and so I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in voting for H.R. 1380.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DR.
ROBERT SHANKERMAN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 7, 2020

Mr. COSTA. Madam, Speaker, I rise today along with my colleague, Mr. COX, to honor the life of a great doctor and San Joaquin Valley resident, Dr. Robert Shankerman, who passed away September 19, 2020. He was a father, brother, doctor and a caring leader in our community.

Robert was a renowned doctor who spent many years championing disadvantaged and rural communities. He graduated from Tulare University and completed his post-graduate education at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota; one of the nation's best hospitals.

Since 2014, Robert served at the United Health Centers (UHC). He was the Chief Medical Officer for UHC of San Joaquin Valley and was responsible for clinical operations at 21 health centers in the Central Valley. UHC provides services to more than 125,000 patients in Fresno, Tulare, and Kings counties.

During his time at UHC, Dr. Shankerman established the UHC/UCSF Family Practice Residency program at the Parlier Health Center, where he also provided services to patients. He recruited, trained and placed medical practitioners as the organization grew, which helped lead to its current success. While in this position, he mentored more than 155 medical professionals, including UHC medical staff, recent graduates from various residency programs, along with national and international transfers.

Robert was affiliated with the UC San Diego Medical School and served as an Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine. Previously he was Chief Medical Officer for Clinica Sierra Vista. He was a diplomat for the American Board of Internal Medicine and certified HIV specialist. In 2001, he was awarded the pres-

tigious physician recognition award from the American Medical Association.

Robert was highly respected by many people across the San Joaquin Valley. He dedicated most of his time treating and helping migrant workers and underprivileged communities. He worked long shifts ranging from 14 to 15-hour days and was committed to helping others.

He is survived by his partner of more than 20 years, Dr. Regis Debarros, a physician with United Health Centers; his father Floyd Shankerman, sister Cindy Loewenberg; and brothers Steven and Jason Shankerman.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join us in celebrating and honoring the life of a great champion and doctor, Dr. Robert Shankerman. His teachings and legacy will be remembered for many years to come. We join his family, friends and community in honoring his great life and legacy.

IN HONOR OF CATHERINE
MAHANPOUR

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 7, 2020

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Catherine Mahanpour for her service as she departs the city council of Foster City and the board of directors of the Estero Municipal Improvement District. As she leaves office, a dignified voice for neighborhoods and a high quality of life is departing.

Catherine graduated from the University of Maine in 1990 with high distinction and a B.A. in Political Science. Five years later she matriculated to Golden Gate University School of Law and attained her degree in 1998. She was licensed to practice in 1999. She served as an adjunct professor at her alma mater on multiple occasions since, and as a member of the Advisory Board of the California State Bar of the East Bay. Since 2013, she has been a court appointed special advocate for foster children in San Mateo County.

When she ran for election in 2015, Catherine stressed the need to prevent the "overgrowth" of Foster City and the deleterious impacts of traffic on the quality of life of residents. She called for a pause in housing construction and a dialogue with regional agencies to find choices about population growth that met the sensibilities of the neighborhoods she hoped to represent. She also called for a different tone in council meetings, urging respect for differing opinions during council meetings. She supported a local school bond and promised to watch over the funds should voters approve the measure.

During her service on the council, she was chair of the C/CAG legislative committee, the city's representative to the mosquito abatement district, and served on the county's long-range planning committee and the Silicon Valley Recovery Roundtable for COVID-19 Response. She was the driving force for the council's new Code of Conduct, adopted on November 2, 2020. She helped change the agenda-setting process and brought transparency to the process of setting agenda topics.

Foster City is laced with beautiful lagoons that are the responsibility of the city. Dangerous accidents can also happen on these