

ANIMAL WELFARE

By Sarah Conley

Since our May 2015 report, the CFA AWC has been busy. We have expanded our lean, fighting team to include both Bill Schreiber and tiger trainer Ryan Easley. Both Bill and Ryan have been valuable assets in the fight against animal rights extremism and misguided legislation. We are proud to have them as two very active members of the committee.

The AWC has also lost one member: Lane Talburt. In February 2016, Lane expressed a desire to step back from CFA activities for personal reasons. While we are sad to see him go, we know he is still active in his support for animals and in his love for circus.

2015 was largely occupied by fighting the attempted elephant guide ban in California, SB 716. We lobbied, wrote letters, supported social media campaigns, boosted Facebook posts (thanks to a grant from the Edith Johnston Memorial Trust Fund), held tweet storms, and did everything else we could think of. In the end, our side won when Governor Jerry Brown vetoed the bad bill. Animal rights extremists were very upset and have brought the bill back again this year, changing it from criminal penalties to civil ones. The new bill is SB 1062 and we are actively fighting it every day.

At the beginning of 2016 I asked for a NCPS grant for additional funding to promote social media campaigns to fight bad legislation. As I write this report we are implementing some of those funds in the California SB 1062 battle, and working with people on the ground in Pittsburg to determine if we should use some to rally opposition against their recent attempt at banning performing animals.

It is too early in the legislative season to give a rundown on wins and losses. What I do know is that we have statewide battles in Rhode Island, California, Illinois, New Jersey, and Hawaii. Right now on the city level we have Pittsburg, PA. On the federal level we are again fighting the deceptively named Big Cat Public Safety Act. We have an extremely full plate, and according to many accounts the extremists are also trying to revive the Traveling Exotic Animal Protection Act (TEAPA), which is essentially a national ban on animals in circus.

Our legislative fights are catalogued, along with who to contact and how to help on the CFA Grassroots webpage: www.grassroots.circusfan.org. Mary Lou Kelly from Feld Entertainment is an invaluable asset in that regard.

If anyone has any questions, or would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact me.