



SMALL & RURAL LAW ENFORCEMENT EXECUTIVES' ASSOCIATION

Serving America's Small, Rural & Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies

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June 4, 2023

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the Small and Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association (SRLEEA), one of the nation's leading law enforcement organizations representing sheriffs, tribal enforcement, corrections officers, and other sworn officers, we respectfully ask for your support of federal legislation to eliminate the inhumane practices of cockfighting and dogfighting. We represent agencies with 100 or fewer sworn employees, agencies serving communities with a population of less than 200 people per square mile, and any federally recognized agency serving a tribal community, band, nation, or other organized group or community of indigenous people of North America, including any Alaska Native village, and we are united in wanting to stamp out this form of organized crime.

Specifically, we ask you to cosponsor the Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-Risk Trafficking Act, H.R. 2742. The legislation addresses gambling through the internet and webcasting on dogfights and cockfights, addresses the use of U.S. Postal Service offices for illegal shipping of fighting animals through the mail, and enables civil actions against know, organized animal fighting operators.

SRLEEA recognizes that animal fighting is banned in all states and that the federal government plays a critical role in complementing our work to interdict animal fighting operations. These are often complex operations, requiring multiple agencies that stretch across states and territories and even national boundaries. Our agencies have finite resources and we often cannot conduct a complete investigation if an animal fighting ring stretches across county, state, or territorial lines.

We also have significant issues with the disposition of seized fighting animals. The federal government, along with non-profit animal welfare groups, can also play an important supplemental role in helping us enforce the laws to halt inhumane animal fights.

It is essential for policymakers to understand that animal fighting is ALWAYS bound up with other crimes. Illegal gambling is always present, but often present are money laundering, narcotics possession, and other criminal conduct. We have seen outbursts of violence at cockfights, including a mass shooting at a cockfight in April in Hawaii. We know that when we break up animal fighting rings, we make our communities safer and more livable.

A major part of law enforcement work involves deterrence. Strengthening federal law and intimidating criminals, reminding them that the costs of their conduct will threaten their freedom, may drive some of these people out of the business. Animal cruelty crimes are bound up with other dangerous social behaviors. Please support the FIGHT Act to help us unravel organized crime.

Sincerely,

Chief John Thompson, Executive Vice President