

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you as the lead Democratic co-sponsor of H.R. 2742, the FIGHT Act, to ask for your public support of this legislation, which will put a stop to the scourge of illegal animal fighting.

Cockfighting and dogfighting are felonies in every state, and they are federally outlawed under the federal animal fighting statute (7 U.S.C. § 2156). Nevertheless, animal fighting remains widespread, due to insufficient enforcement at home and high demand for American-bred fighting animals in dozens of nations, particularly Mexico.

The FIGHT Act would crack down on these violent and inhumane crimes and trafficking in fighting animals by prohibiting online gambling on illegal animal fights, prohibiting the shipment of adult roosters, allowing private citizens to sue animal fighters in civil court, and allowing courts to seize property used in animal fighting crimes upon a conviction. This legislation has been endorsed by more than 400 affected stakeholder organizations like the Small and Rural Law Enforcement Executive Association, as well as a host of state sheriffs' associations and commercial poultry associations.

Cartels and gangs smuggle hundreds of thousands of fighting animals to dozens of countries, posing risks not only to public safety but also public health. Cockfighting contributed to the spread of the H5N1 avian flu in Asia, and it could do the same here. Ten of the 15 outbreaks of virulent Newcastle Disease in the U.S. in recent decades were linked to the trafficking of fighting birds from Mexico into the United States. Because our government indemnifies poultry farmers for financial losses associated with culling a flock when it is infected by a fighting bird, some estimates indicate that more recent infectious diseases spread by the movement of cockfighting birds have cost American taxpayers more than \$1 billion.

Not only do animal fights spread disease and involve malicious cruelty to innocent creatures, but they are frequently linked to other illicit activity like money laundering, drug trafficking, illegal gambling, and even murder. Late last year, a chilling double murder took place at a dogfight in Mississippi. In 2022, a cockfighting derby in Mexico was the scene of a massacre of 20 people,

including a Chicago resident. Already in 2024, a teenage boy from Washington state was tragically killed in the crossfire of cartel-on-cartel violence at a cockfight in Mexico.

Staged animal fights, and trafficking of animals to die in fighting pits, have no place in a great nation such as ours. I urge you, as the leader of our country, to speak out against them by endorsing the FIGHT Act and directing the appropriate federal law enforcement agencies to dismantle fighting rings from Puerto Rico and Florida to Oregon and Hawaii.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Salinas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress