

## Legislation Against Exotic Feline Contact Introduced

### **Bill would prohibit feeding, playing with or petting certain big cats.**

US Rep. Jim Ryun (R-KS) has introduced in the US House of Representatives a federal bill that would prohibit humans from touching felines such as cougars and tigers, force animal facilities to adopt stronger safety precautions and increase fines for violations.

The bill, HR 5909, was introduced on July 26. Its patterned after Kansas legislation passed in reaction to the death of Haley Hilderbrand, a Kansas teen who was killed by a 700-lb. tiger last year during a high school senior photo shoot at a federally licensed sanctuary.

HR 5909, also called Haleys Act, would criminalize any public contact with felines like lions, tigers or cougars. It proposes fines of up to \$10,000 to licensed exhibitors who allow anyone to bottle feed, pet, or play with baby felines.

Current USDA policy requires proper caging or barriers when exhibiting tiger, lion, cougar, cheetah, leopard, or jaguar cats older than 16 weeks; and federal regulations also prohibit public contact with adult exotic cats, even when restrained.

The Feline Conservation Federation, a non-profit organization representing licensed educators, exhibitors, sanctuaries, zoos, breeders and responsible owners, has come out against the bill.

The FCF says the bill is totally unnecessary because Hilderbrands death was the result of a willful violation of already established regulations.

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