

118TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 10049

To amend the African Elephant Conservation Act and Asian Elephant Conservation Act to ban keeping elephants in captivity at zoological parks.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 25, 2024

Ms. MALLIOTAKIS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

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## A BILL

To amend the African Elephant Conservation Act and Asian Elephant Conservation Act to ban keeping elephants in captivity at zoological parks.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Captivity of Helpless  
5 Elephants Reduction Act of 2024” or the “CHER Act of  
6 2024”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

9 (1) Elephants live in a matriarchal hierarchy  
10 where a lead female leads a large herd in the wild

1 and migrates, traveling hundreds of miles every  
2 year. African and Asian elephants have been dem-  
3 onstrated to possess, amongst other things, inten-  
4 tional communication, and learning, memory, and  
5 categorization abilities. An Emory University experi-  
6 ment showed that a female elephant seemed to rec-  
7 ognize herself in a mirror, a result attributed to self-  
8 awareness only seen otherwise in humans, dolphins,  
9 and chimpanzees.

10 (2) Captivity does not provide for the needs of  
11 normal elephant behavior and reproduction. As a re-  
12 sult, captive elephants suffer both physical and emo-  
13 tional trauma including hernias, arthritis, mental  
14 degradation, and high calf mortality. The average  
15 lifespan of a captive elephant is 17 years; in the  
16 wild, elephants can live for 50 years or more.

17 (3) It is estimated that the cost of caring for  
18 an elephant in captivity can be up to \$100,000 per  
19 year. In 2004, the Detroit Zoo became the first  
20 major American zoo to shut down its elephant ex-  
21 hibit on ethical grounds. In 2006, the Bronx Zoo an-  
22 nounced that it would close its exhibit once its three  
23 elephants died. Since the early 1990s, more than 22  
24 zoos had shut down their elephant exhibits or an-

1 nounced that they were phasing them out, including  
2 those in Seattle, San Francisco, and Chicago.

3 (4) The United Kingdom phased out all cir-  
4 cuses featuring wild animal performances by 2020  
5 and announced its intention to ban the captivity of  
6 elephants in zoos and safari parks. Dozens of other  
7 countries around the world have similar prohibitions,  
8 including Austria, Greece, Israel, Mexico, Peru, and  
9 Singapore. India bans the keeping of elephants in  
10 circuses and zoos.

11 **SEC. 3. PURPOSES.**

12 The purposes of this Act are the following:

13 (1) To ban the display, husbandry, and breed-  
14 ing of African elephants in zoological parks in the  
15 United States and transfer existing African ele-  
16 phants in such parks to authorized sanctuaries.

17 (2) To ban the display, husbandry, and breed-  
18 ing of Asian elephants in zoological parks in the  
19 United States and transfer existing Asian elephants  
20 in such parks to authorized sanctuaries.

21 **SEC. 4. INCREASING VIABILITY OF SPECIES CONSERVA-**  
22 **TION THROUGH RELOCATION.**

23 (a) Section 4223 of the African Elephant Conserva-  
24 tion Act (16 U.S.C. 4201–4246) is amended by adding  
25 at the end the following:

1           “(6) to house and/or manage African elephants  
2           in zoological and safari parks. All African elephants  
3           residing in zoological and safari parks before the en-  
4           actment of this amendment shall be transferred to  
5           authorized wildlife sanctuaries.”.

6           (b) Section 4262 of the Asian Elephant Conservation  
7 Act (16 U.S.C. 4261–4266) is amended by adding at the  
8 end the following:

9           “(4) To assist in the conservation of Asian ele-  
10          phants by prohibiting zoological and safari parks  
11          from housing and managing Asian elephants and  
12          transferring any rhinoceros species residing in zoo-  
13          logical and safari parks before the enactment of this  
14          amendment to authorized wildlife sanctuaries.”.

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