

**American Ferret Association**  
**Guidelines and talking points for contacting legislators regarding**  
**H.R. 669, the Nonnative Wildlife Invasion Prevention Act**

*A contact list of Members of Congress who are on the Committee On Natural Resources Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans, and Wildlife follows at the bottom of this document on page three.*

1. Talking points - mention these when you make contact with legislators in order to reinforce your position. **AFA's opposition to the bill is contingent upon ferrets being added to the list of exempt animals. We are therefore simply asking at this time that the bill be amended to do that rather than asking that the bill be voted down outright.**
  - a. Ferrets are not wildlife and thus should not be subject to the provisions of this bill. The domesticated nature of *mustela putorius furo* has been established over many years and acknowledged by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Museum of Natural History, the ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States, numerous state departments of wildlife, conservation, natural resources, or fish and game, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the International Species Information System.
  - b. In addition, the Humane Society of the United States, **a prominent supporter of HR 669**, has agreed to ask that ferrets be added to the exemption list in section 14(5)(D) of the bill.
  - c. Requiring the Secretary of the Interior to make a determination that ferrets are "common and clearly domesticated," in the language of the bill, is unnecessary and a waste of Federal resources since that has already been conclusively determined.
  - d. As a visit to the ferret aisle of any chain pet store will demonstrate, ferrets are clearly a well-accepted and "mainstream" household companion animal that is now found throughout the United States with no harm resulting to native flora or fauna.
  - e. Numerous state, county, and municipal codes and ordinances throughout the United States either list ferrets along with dogs and cats as permitted domestic animals or specifically exclude them from lists of prohibited wildlife that include family *mustelidae*. For example, Monroe County, Florida – home to Everglades National Park and Key West as well as three national wildlife refuges and a national deer refuge, and arguably one of the most ecologically sensitive localities in the United States – specifically lists ferrets within its definition of "domesticated companion animals."
  - f. Animals – such as ferrets – that are obviously domesticated household pets and not potentially dangerous wildlife should, for reasons of simple fairness, be specifically excluded from the bill's provisions just as dogs, cats, rabbits, and goldfish are.

2. Guidelines - “rules of the road” when communicating with Members of Congress
- a. BE POLITE AND RESPECTFUL. Address the person on the envelope or at the top of the fax/email as “The Honorable John Smith” and in the salutation as “Dear Representative Smith” or “Dear Congresswoman Jones.” Do not let your emotions or passions determine how you communicate. Coming across as angry, snarky, or rude will damage our cause and get you nowhere. Put yourself in the other person’s position and imagine how you would react to receiving what amounts to enormous quantities of hate mail on a daily basis.
  - b. If you live in one of the subcommittee members’ districts, it is critical that you make sure to contact that person for sure, even if you don’t contact the entire committee, and identify yourself as his or her constituent.
  - c. Madeleine Bordallo of Guam is chair of the subcommittee. If you can only contact one person, and you are not a constituent of anyone on the subcommittee, contact her. Note that representatives from Guam, Virgin Islands, Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia vote in committee but cannot vote on the House floor.
  - d. Let the facts speak for themselves. Try not to overwhelm the person with emotional opinions. Use the talking points above to support your position.
  - e. Keep whatever you write concise, brief, and to the point. Do not exceed one page.
  - f. Personally written letters are always the best way of communicating with Congress. Unfortunately, “snail mail” is still scanned for anthrax in Washington. Either mail your letter to one of the Congressperson’s home district offices, or fax your letter. Email would be the last choice. It’s more convenient and takes less time, but for exactly those reasons has less impact.
  - g. Communicate NOW while you’re thinking about it. Time is of the essence.
  - h. Tell as many friends, family members, and other ferret enthusiasts as you can about this bill, AFA’s position on the bill, and the need to let the subcommittee members know that HR 669 must be amended to exclude ferrets from restrictions on nonnative wildlife species.
  - i. Finally, please send a short email thanking the Humane Society of the United States for acting on our behalf to Beth Preiss, Director, HSUS Exotic Pets Campaign, at [bpreiss@hsus.org](mailto:bpreiss@hsus.org).

**THANK YOU FOR SPEAKING OUT ON BEHALF OF THOSE WHO CANNOT.**

**The subcommittee meeting is at 10:00am on Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 in room 1324, Longworth House Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.**

**It is open to the public. If you live in the Washington area, please join AFA legislative affairs director David Gaines at this meeting to show your support for ferrets.**

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