

The Honorable Representative _____

Dear Representative _____,

As elections draw near, I am one registered voter who will pay close attention to my Representative's stance on the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (H.R. 4239/S. 3880).

This bill inflates the Animal Enterprise Protection Act of 1992 with unnecessarily harsh penalties for anyone who "damages or causes the loss of any real or personal property (including animals or records) used by an animal enterprise." Shockingly, the Senate approved an amended version of S. 3880 on 9/29/06, with little regard for the flood of opposition from its constituency.

I call upon my Representative to protect my right to engage in all forms of legal protest — including non-violent picketing, boycotts, letter campaigns, media exposure, etc. — even if those activities result in profit loss for an animal enterprise. Please oppose the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) and its shameful attempt to equate activists with terrorists.

Under AETA, it is illegal to utilize the mail or interstate or foreign commerce as part of a "conspiracy" to initiate economic impairment to manufacturers, distributors and sellers of animals or animal products; research facilities; pet stores; breeders; zoos; rodeos; circuses, etc.

This bill impedes legal activities to instigate reform for animals. An organization or private citizen who asks people to boycott companies with abusive procedures may be labeled a "terrorist" if that action leads to economic damage. A boycott is designed to result in economic damage! It prompts a company to comply with animal welfare laws and cease cruel practices. Indeed, almost any conscientious objector meets AETA's ambiguous criterion for "terrorist." Protests against abusive animal enterprises intend to influence policy and "damage" consumer support.

While AETA appears to grant immunity for "lawful economic disruption that results from lawful public, governmental, or business reaction to the disclosure of information about an animal enterprise" its hazy language fails to embody legal whistle-blowing and cruelty investigations. For example, this bill could potentially disarm humane inspectors or consumer watchdog groups who seek to expose allegations of cruelty or unhygienic conditions inside a puppy mill, research lab or factory farm.

AETA is superfluous. Disciplinary measures already exist for vandalism and property loss, criminal trespass, harassment, assault and bodily injury. If an animal advocate commits the aforementioned crimes, they should be arrested and prosecuted in the same manner as any other lawbreaker.

I am baffled as to why my government believes I need the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act to feel safe. I would feel far more secure if the Department of Homeland Security focused on genuine domestic security threats — rather than implement a law that erodes the First Amendment rights of valid organizations and law-abiding citizens.

Your position on the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act will affect my vote during the November election. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,