



Animal News

Spring 2014

Proposed Amendment to Wisconsin's Public Records Law Targets Animal Rights Activists

by Leslie Hamilton, Treasurer

"Fatal brain abscess." "Nine eye coil replacement surgeries on one animal." "Animal suffered multiple seizures and later found dead in cage after implant of cylinder resulted in cerebral swelling." "Animal died while left unattended in restraint chair." These notations, found in UW-Madison lab records, represent the only information available to us regarding the suffering and death experienced daily by the animals in the UW's laboratories. If we did not have access to these public records, those animals' stories would not be told. How have we been able to obtain copies of these records? Do we have moles in the labs? No, we have simply filed requests under Wisconsin's Public Records law. Well, "simply" is not quite accurate. At times it seems UW has made it its mission to block every avenue for holding it accountable for the thousands of animals in its labs.

Routinely, UW will take months, and occasionally years, to respond to our public records requests even though the statute mandates a response "as soon as practicable and without delay." UW, although allowed to charge an hourly fee for locating a record and a reasonable charge for making copies, has also required an up-front payment for "estimated costs" that is grossly inflated, a practice that discourages all but the wealthiest from pursuing records requests. Recently, the UW began charging the AFAE a fee for the time it took to redact the records, i.e., remove information the UW deemed confidential, even though such a fee was determined illegal years ago by the Wisconsin Courts and the Wisconsin Attorney General's Office. Nevertheless, we have continued to pursue records from the UW in order to shine a light on what is happening in the labs. Therefore, we were alarmed when UW persuaded the Wisconsin legislature to introduce an amendment to the public

records law that was specifically aimed at animal rights activists.

On February 4, 2014, 2013 Assembly Bill 729 was introduced at the request of UW for the purpose of exempting UW's animal lab records from Wisconsin's open records law. In a memo circulated among the legislators, UW claimed that responding to records requests from animal rights activists was costing it thousands of dollars and impeding research at UW. UW could provide no examples where research was impeded or where UW's competitive edge was harmed but UW hoped it could rally the legislators to its side by pointing its finger at those "crazy animal people".

At the public hearing on AB 729, I appeared and testified against the bill. As an attorney for a local government agency for over 34 years, I specialized in Wisconsin's Public Records law. I also recently spent 3-years representing PETA in an open records lawsuit against UW. I explained to the Assembly committee that UW's proposed amendment was not only unnecessary but that UW's motive for requesting the exemption had nothing to do with the purported risk to its competitive edge but represented merely an attempt to control its public image. UW's real concern is not the animal rights groups it hoped the legislature would rally against, but the public's reaction to the information obtained by these groups. The real question for the legislature: Does UW's adversarial relationship with animal rights groups legitimize an amendment to a decades old law that is intended to protect the right of every Wisconsin citizen to access information necessary to hold his or her elected and appointed officials accountable? Several professional

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Elephants Living Free Continues to Labor on Behalf of Wrongs Committed by the Circus

by Julie Grosso, Board Officer and ELF Coordinator



- Some of the elephants displayed healing, circular skin lesions.
- The female elephants are suspected of having possible underlying trauma and/or arthritic problems.
- Camels had moderate to severe skin thickening and hair loss; one camel had lesions.

Other volunteers that attended the circus witnessed aggressive bullhook use during forced elephant rides. Another volunteer witnessed an assistant handler holding a shovel up to the anus of an elephant as an intimidation method to discourage her from defecating during elephant rides. There is no reason a shovel should be held up to any animal in this manner.

Dedicated volunteers from Alliance for Animals and the Environment's Elephants Living Free (ELF) stood outside the Alliant Energy Center in the bitter cold offering educational pamphlets to the circus goers at the George Carden Circus, contracted by the Zor Shrine Circus. Additional volunteers attended and documented the shows. This year, Dane County Supervisor Al Matano, Dane County District 18 candidate, Michele Ritt, and veterinarian Bridget Baker attended the circus to evaluate the condition of the animals forced to perform and give rides.

Alliance For Animals and the Environment filed another complaint with the USDA based on the videos and photos taken February 14-16, 2014, along with Bridget's evaluation of the animals in the circus.

Unfortunately, there were several concerns, including medical problems and interactions with trainers during performance. Bridget's report includes the following concerns:

Thank you to those who donated to print leaflets and to our volunteers for all of their help: Debbie Fields, Jillian Fields, Susan Shepanek, Lyndsey Cross, Julian Porter, Mickey Stewart, Lynn Pauly, Megan Ryan, Meg Hamele, Jake Kurczewski, Sue Miller, Cheryl Abbate, Gina Stuessy, Charlie Talbert, Jamie Bradley, Stephanie Weis, Miriam Gevinson, Teal, Bridger Baker, Al Matano, and Michele Ritt.

- Multiple trainers used excessive and potentially inappropriate whipping on numerous occasions.
- Multiple tigers were housed together in transport cages into the arena, but cages appeared too small to house multiple tigers.
- Trainers and handlers used whips on camels on multiple occasions with each camel, making contact with multiple body regions.
- One female elephant was constantly dragging her trunk and during the performance left her trunk hanging flaccidly. She appears to have neurologic deficits affecting her trunk.
- A female elephant was observed intermittently opening her mouth. This could be behavioral or indicate underlying respiratory or cardiac disease.

Proposed Amendment con't from P1

media groups also registered in opposition and the Assembly agreed that the proposed amendment was unnecessary and it was removed from the bill.

Every business, institution and individual is concerned about how it is perceived by the public. But there is one significant difference between UW and Covance, for example, which is also in the business of conducting experiments on animals. UW is a government institution and as such, it is required by our system of government to be both transparent and accountable to the people.

Expanded Animal Testing of Cosmetics and Personal Care Products before Congress

by Alexa McCormack, Executive Director

The United States House of Representatives has taken HR 1385, the Safe Cosmetics and Personal Care Act, to review. Many have done a cursory reading of this bill and determined that it is a step ahead for animal rights, as the bill contains specific wording "to minimize the use of animal testing of ingredients and cosmetics, the Secretary shall (1) require, where practicable, alternative testing methods that (A) do not involve the use of an animal to test the chemical substance; (B) provide information that is equivalent or superior in scientific quality to the animal testing method; and (C) use fewer animals than conventional animal-based tests when non-animal methods are impracticable, including the use of tests that combine multiple endpoints" (HR 1385). That certainly sounds like a bill that would minimize animal testing!

The reality is very different. Because a few items, such as the recently popular Brazilian Blowout hair line (which contained excessive formaldehyde and caused a rash of health issues in users) this bill has been proposed and would mandate the re-testing of nearly every personal care and cosmetic item on the market. The problem originates in the current federal guidelines that rely upon tests by the company marketing a product, not independent sources; the FDA has long been criticized for this practice. Now, our lawmakers have realized how flawed self-testing is, but their reaction is deeply flawed.

The war against consumer product animal testing has been gaining ground in recent years. The European Union passed sweeping legislation that virtually bans the sale of animal-tested cosmetics

and personal care items within its borders. India and Israel have also banned animal testing for these purposes. Even China, which has long been vilified for its policy of requiring animal testing of any cosmetic/ personal care item imported into its lands for sale (causing companies to choose between the EU and China markets) has begun planning a reduction in animal testing that would ultimately become a ban.

Now, the US wants to step backward and institute this bill, which, for all its positive-sounding language, would result in an additional 1-11.5 million animals in testing labs to satisfy this bill alone (source: Leaping Bunny).

Many of us do not realize that virtually every product we use on our bodies and homes has potentially been animal tested. Animals in labs are subjected to abrasion testing of our tissue paper, Draize testing of our contact lens solutions and cosmetics, and LD-50 (Lethal Dose 50% -- test pictured above right) of everything from shampoo to cleaning products. Organizations like Leaping Bunny and PETA certify companies who abstain from animal testing with their cruelty-free seal of approval. Please visit their websites for comprehensive cruelty-free shopping guides.

Alternatives to animal testing exist; HR 1385 would require extensive testing with inadequate provisions to protect the lives of animals. In a world where the Wisconsin legislature approved the sale of any unadopted shelter animal to a lab for \$1 "to increase revenue," should we trust the vague wording of this law? Please contact your US representative to voice your opposition to HR 1385 and encourage those you know to do the same.





Alliance for Animals and the Environment

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Remembering Our Friends

In memory of Alex, Bailey, Charlie, Buttons and so many others from Marilyn Wilbur.

In memory of Helene Dwyer, without whom the Alliance for Animals and the Environment would not be what it is today.

In memory of Daisy, our charming neighbor, from Charlie and Vicky Talbert.

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Upcoming Events

Isthmus Green Day, Saturday, April 26, 10 am-5 pm, Monona Terrace, Madison

Great American Meat-Out, Saturday, April 12, 1-2:30 pm, State Street, Madison

Earth Day, Tuesday, April 22, Join AFAE at the Eighth Annual Nelson Institute Earth Day Conference at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center

Mad City Vegan Fest, Saturday, June 7, 10 am-5 pm, Goodman Community Center, 149 Waubesa Street, Madison, WI 53704