

## **Proposed Chicago City Council Resolution re: AZA Standards for Elephants**

Whereas the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) inspects and accredits zoos and establishes standards for the management and care of elephants at accredited zoos; and

Whereas 39 elephants, excluding those 2 years old and younger, died between January 2000 and June 2005 at AZA-accredited facilities across the country, and more than half of those 39 elephants never reached the age of 40, while a natural lifespan for elephants can be 70 years;

Whereas the AZA "Standards for Elephant Management and Care," adopted March 21, 2001, and updated May 5, 2003, for space (sections 1.4.1 and 1.4.2), training (section 5.1.2) and restraint (section 5.5.1) do not meet the physical and psychological needs of elephants; and

Whereas AZA standards allow member zoos to keep elephants, who can weigh in excess of 13,000 pounds and in nature often walk 30 miles a day, in indoor enclosures of 20 feet by 20 feet and outdoor enclosures of 40 feet by 45 feet; and

Whereas the primary cause of the suffering and premature death of elephants in captivity is foot disorders and arthritis caused by long hours of standing on hard substrates, contamination resulting from standing in their own waste, and forced inactivity caused by lack of sufficient space; and

Whereas elephants suffering from chronic foot disorders and arthritis can improve significantly or recover completely from these debilitating conditions when provided with adequate space and appropriate substrates and medical attention; and

Whereas a 34-year study of 2,000 individual free-ranging elephants revealed that wild elephants do not develop foot problems and they are not seen swaying rhythmically back and forth; and

Whereas AZA standards allow member zoos to chain elephants for up to 12 hours per day; and

Whereas chaining elephants limits the animals' activity, often prevents natural behaviors such as socializing, can promote stereotypic behavior and aggression toward keepers, and has been linked to foot disorders, arthritis, and colic sometimes leading to death; and

Whereas AZA standards allow member zoos to strike elephants with bullhooks; and

Whereas quality research reveals that natural elephant society is a positive and supportive environment in which elephants are protected, comforted, and reassured but never subjected to corporal punishment; and

Whereas the AZA sanctions bullhook use causing elephants to experience anxiety, fear, distress, and physical and psychological pain and suffering and become aggressive; and

Now therefore be it resolved by the City Council of Chicago that:

- (a) The AZA to revise its Standards for Elephant Management, transportation and care to better address the physical and psychological needs of elephants by:
- (1) Defining adequate space for indoor and outdoor enclosures as large enough to allow captive elephants to exercise similarly to how elephants exercise in the wild with appropriate surfaces that eliminate or reduce elephant contact with hard, unyielding surfaces; and

- (2) Prohibiting the use of control and training devices such as bullhooks and chaining
- (3) prescribing and requiring best practices for responsible elephant management, transportation and care, based on updated research and information.
- (b) The Chicago City Clerk will immediately send this resolution to the Illinois delegation and AZA.
- (c) The City Council requests that the Illinois Congressional delegation pursue improvement of AZA standards according to information stated herein.

*Mary Ann Smith*  
 MARY ANN SMITH  
 Alderman, 48<sup>th</sup> Ward

*Joe A. ...*

*Edward ... 50*

*James ... 37*

*Richard ... 22*

*Frank ... 13*

*... 21*

*... 9th*

*... 35th*

*Doni ... 4th*

*Ray ... 31st*