

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7159

To amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to adjust provisions relating to captive wildlife offenses.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 20, 2026

Mr. GOSAR introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to adjust provisions relating to captive wildlife offenses.

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 “Protecting Local Zoos
5 Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO CAPTIVE WILDLIFE OFFENSES**

7 **UNDER LACEY ACT AMENDMENTS OF 1981.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3(e) of the Lacey Act
9 Amendments of 1981 (16 U.S.C. 3372(e)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “in paragraph (2)” and inserting “in paragraphs (2) and (3)”;

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) by inserting “an entity licensed to hold animals under a Class B license from the Department of Agriculture,” before “an entity exhibiting animals”;

(ii) in clause (i)—

(I) in subclause (I), by inserting “, including an owner, executive, or volunteer,” after “or contractor”; and

(II) in subclause (II), by inserting “or other veterinary or medical professional, such as a veterinary assistant, veterinary technician, or non-veterinary specialist” after “veterinarian”;

(iii) in clause (ii), by striking “snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*),”;

(B) in subparagraph (D), by striking “or” at the end;

(C) in subparagraph (E)(iii), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

(D) by adding at the end the following:

“(F) a person described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) that is in possession of any prohibited wildlife species and—

“(i) registers each individual animal of each prohibited wildlife species possessed by the person with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; and

“(ii) beginning on the date of such registration, does not—

“(I) breed, acquire, or sell any prohibited wildlife species;

“(II) allow direct contact between the public and any prohibited wildlife species; and

“(III) exhibit to the public any prohibited wildlife species.”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(3) EXPORT AND IMPORT TO FOREIGN ENTITIES.—Notwithstanding paragraph (1), an entity or a facility described in paragraph (2)(A) that is in compliance with the requirements of that paragraph may export to or import from a foreign entity that is authorized to operate in the country within which it is located and is lawfully operating in such coun-

try at the time of such export or import a prohibited wildlife species.

“(4) CANCELLATION OF MISTAKEN REGISTRATION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—A covered registered entity or individual may submit to the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, an application to cancel the registration under paragraph (2)(E) of such covered registered entity or individual.

“(B) APPLICATION REQUIREMENT.—A covered registered entity or individual shall include in an application submitted under subparagraph (A) evidence sufficient for the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to determine that the covered registered entity or individual qualifies for an exception from the application of paragraph (1) pursuant to subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (2) as of the date on which the covered registered entity or individual—

1 “(i) registered with the United States
2 Fish and Wildlife Service under paragraph
3 (2)(E); and

4 “(ii) submits such application.

5 “(C) GRANT OF APPLICATION.—If the Sec-
6 retary of the Interior, acting through the Direc-
7 tor of the United States Fish and Wildlife Serv-
8 ice, makes an affirmative determination under
9 subparagraph (B) with respect to an application
10 submitted by a covered registered entity or indi-
11 vidual under subparagraph (A), the Director
12 shall grant such application.

13 “(D) COVERED REGISTERED ENTITY OR
14 INDIVIDUAL DEFINED.—In this paragraph, the
15 term ‘covered registered entity or individual’
16 means an entity or individual described in para-
17 graph (2)(E) that—

18 “(i) is in compliance with the require-
19 ments of that paragraph;

20 “(ii) registered with the United States
21 Fish and Wildlife Service as described in
22 that paragraph; and

23 “(iii) would have, on the date of such
24 registration, qualified for an exception
25 from the application of paragraph (1) pur-

1 suant to subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of
2 paragraph (2).”.

3 (b) DEFINITION OF PROHIBITED WILDLIFE SPE-
4 CIES.—Section 2(h) of the Lacey Act Amendments of
5 1981 (16 U.S.C. 3371(h)) is amended—

6 (1) by striking “The term” and inserting the
7 following:

8 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The term”; and

9 (2) by adding at the end the following:

10 “(2) EXCLUSIONS.—The term ‘prohibited wild-
11 life species’ does not include the snow leopard
12 (*Uncia uncia*) or the clouded leopard (*Neofelis*
13 *nebulosa*) or any hybrid of either such species.”.

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