

Viola Davis

May 21, 2013

The Honorable V. Susan Sosnowski
Chair, Committee on Environment and Agriculture
The Senate of Rhode Island

Via e-mail: sen-sosnowski@rilin.state.ri.us

Dear Senator Sosnowski:

Having grown up in Rhode Island and as someone concerned about cruelty to animals, I am writing on behalf of my friends at PETA to urge you to support S.B. 813, which would prohibit inhumane treatment of elephants used in circuses, including the use of a bullhook—a device with a sharp hook on the end that resembles a fireplace poker and is used to hurt and punish elephants.

An [undercover investigation](#) of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus revealed that elephants were struck repeatedly with bullhooks backstage just before performances in order to intimidate them and remind them that they must do as they're told or suffer the painful consequences. And recent sworn affidavits from arena workers on opposite sides of the country report barbaric bullhook beatings by Ringling staff, including an [incident](#) in which an animal attendant repeatedly and forcefully struck a chained elephant on the leg. Just last year, a handler with Piccadilly Circus was caught repeatedly striking an elephant with a bullhook on the face and trunk.

Today, elephant sanctuaries and most zoos never use bullhooks or other weapon-like tools to punish elephants. Corporal punishment has been replaced with positive reinforcement, such as treats and praise. I hope you will extend that decency to elephants used in circuses.

Accredited zoos also now eschew prolonged chaining of elephants, which S.B. 813 would ban in circuses, providing these majestic animals with much-needed relief. Elephants used in the circus are routinely chained on hard surfaces for extensive periods, which leads to painful arthritis and foot problems—the leading reasons why captive elephants are euthanized. Ringling's own records, for example, show that elephants are chained for 26 consecutive hours on average—and up to 100 hours straight—during their frequent trips from city to city.

I sincerely hope you will make the compassionate decision to vote in support of S.B. 813.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely yours,



Viola Davis