



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Governor Cuomo Signs Avella and Rosenthal “Big Cats” Legislation

TONY AVELLA August 11, 2014

*The bill will aim to protect animals, caretakers, bystanders, and those interacting with the animals by preventing direct contact between wild animals and members of the public*

(Queens, NY) Senator Tony Avella was glad to announce today that Governor Cuomo signed bill #S6903-C/A9004-C into law, which Senator Avella authored alongside Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal, that would prohibit direct physical contact between members of the public and captive wild animals at roadside and petting zoos, a majority of which are unlicensed and harbor illegally bred animals.

In New York and throughout the United States, these zoo exhibitors and traveling menageries allow members of the public to hold, take photos with, and otherwise interact with wild animals in a public area. This activity has shown to severely harm the welfare of the animals, endanger the public, and creates a heavy burden on law enforcement.

The legislation has coincidentally sparked extensive discussion with the gaining popularity of a recent trend of posing with tigers on social internet dating websites. Although the legislation was drafted to protect the members of the public from a much wider issue of unregulated and unlicensed petting zoos, it will now also assist in curbing the dangerous posing trend.

Senator Avella stated, “In New York State, and throughout the United States, there are countless roadside and petting zoos with large wild animals which are simply not regulated. The fact that these zoos fly under the radar causes a significant public safety hazard that has yet to be appropriately quantified. What’s worse is that these places rely on members of the public to pay in order to interact with these animals, with practically no professional supervision. Not only does this dangerous practice create severe public safety concerns but also harms the animals themselves, which are illegally bred, prematurely separated from their mothers, traded and oftentimes abused throughout the entire process. I am very glad that Governor Andrew Cuomo signed this important bill into law. This law will now ensure that this type of harmful behavior is outlawed and hopefully prevented so that only reputable zoos and aquariums, accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums are able to provide a safe, learning and entertaining environment.”

The legislation, which was signed by Governor Cuomo yesterday, was narrowly crafted to exclude reputable zoos and aquariums accredited by the American Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA).