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Christopher Lambert Honored by American Lawyers Alliance as Teacher of the Year

Since 1985, the American Lawyers Alliance (ALA) continues to honor and reward Outstanding Middle School and High School Teachers who have made significant contributions in the area of law-related education. Each year, ALA selects three (3) teachers nationwide from a highly competitive pool of applicants. Christopher Lambert, a teacher at Franklin High School in Reisterstown Maryland, was honored as one of the three recipients for the 2019 Teach of the Year Award.

Mr. Lambert started his journey to law-related education as an attorney at Whiteford, Taylor & Preston in Baltimore from 1983 to 1994. After volunteering as a mock trial coach for Baltimore Schools, he felt he could make a greater contribution as a public school teacher, and decided to give up his legal career and pursue a career in teaching. For thirty years, Mr. Lambert has been a mock trial coach at three different Baltimore-area high schools.

Three years ago, he helped create the *Franklin Academy of Law* to support students' law-related activities and enrich the school's law-related offerings. Thirty students are now active in the Academy, and prepare for and compete in mock trial and moot court competitions. They have competed in the Maryland Invitational Moot Court Tournament, and tournaments at Duke University, Princeton, and the Providence Foundation of Law & Leadership in Denver, CO.

Mr. Lambert has received numerous awards and recognition over the years for his work in law-related education. Ms. Shelley Brown, Executive Director of MyLaw, wrote "He instills a tremendous love of learning and the law in his students,

that quite frankly, is magical to witness. His ability to connect with his students, and to teach at levels far beyond the 'typical' classroom is virtually unparalleled...He is a force in law-related education and we, as a community of students, educators, legal professionals, and parents, are privileged to have him in the ranks." ●



The ALA Teacher of the Year Award Luncheon was held in San Francisco, California on August 9, 2019. MSBA President, Dana Williams, was on hand as Mr. Lambert received his well-deserved award.

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Laws for Claws: Regulating Maryland's Exotic Cats

BY CARSON H. BARYLAK AND KENNETH A. VOGEL

Big cats have captured the wonder of the American public. The nation mourned Cecil the lion after he was killed during a trophy hunt. When Louisiana State University's live mascot, Mike the Tiger, succumbed to cancer, the community's grief was palpable. Los Angelenos celebrate Griffith Park's most famous feline, a mountain lion known as "P-22," and "The Lion King" is breaking box office records.

This fascination with big cats has led Americans to treat them in ways that, regardless of intention, are ultimately harmful—especially to captive tigers, lions, leopards and cou-

gars which are held in backyards, basements, roadside zoos, and other substandard facilities.

In the case of tigers, estimates suggest that there are more tigers in captivity across the U.S. than

remain in the wild worldwide. Many are denied proper veterinary care, nutrition, stimulation, and space. Problematic animal displays, as well as exotic "pet" ownership situations, can be

observed in nearly every state, often subject to minimal or non-existent oversight.

Exotic animals used for public display, unlike those held as pets or in private collections,

are governed by the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). Zoos, circuses and other exhibitors, as well as commercial dealers and transporters, are required to obtain a license from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

When it comes to exotic "pets," however, there is no comprehensive federal law in place. Accordingly, private possession of animals is generally governed by state law. State statutes vary widely across the U.S. While some states prohibit the private ownership of dangerous and exotic animals—and, in some cases, restrict operation of animal displays—others place no constraints on the possession of deadly animals like big cats.

Maryland's exotic animal law is among the stronger state-level restrictions. Legislation enacted in 2006 prohibits the import, sale, possession and breeding of dangerous big cats, bears, nonhuman primates, reptiles, and other exotic animals. (Md. Code Ann., Crim. Law §10-621) Although this was an important step forward, the law included a loophole that remains commonplace in state exotic animal laws: it exempts federally licensed exhibitors. This loophole led to two key problems.

First, the law enabled exotic "pet" owners to obtain a USDA license simply to take advantage of the exemption. A USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit found that 70 percent of licensees with four or fewer animals were doing just that. A subsequent audit acknowledged that the problem persisted because licensees are not required to prove that they are in fact exhibiting animals. USDA licenses are extremely easy and inexpensive to obtain but are quite difficult to revoke, which makes this loophole particularly worrisome.

Second, the law failed to create much-needed oversight for Maryland's roadside zoos—including those that house

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dangerous, predatory animals and which have long records of noncompliance with the AWA.

Fortunately, in 2014, the state legislature took a significant step toward remedying these problems by enacting a law to supplement federal regulation of exhibitors. It mandates that USDA-licensed exhibitors may obtain or breed dangerous primates, bears, big cats and certain other animals only if they satisfy liability insurance, staffing, animal disposition planning, and zoonotic disease prevention requirements. In addition to imposing basic operational requirements on exhibitors, the law created substantial obstacles to abuse of the USDA licensee exception.

While this progress is heartening, the question remains: why are big cats and other exotic animals still being kept in unsafe and inhumane conditions at roadside zoos in Maryland? The answer lies, in part, with restrictions that were eliminated from the 2014 legislation prior to its enactment. Specifically, a provision limiting the operations of USDA licensees with significant AWA violations was removed. This concession enabled Maryland's most notorious captive animal exhibits to continue to obtain animals, despite ongoing, documented animal mistreatment and dangerous incidents like escapes and attacks.

One western Maryland facility, for instance, has been accumulating AWA citations for years, with well over 100 violations reflecting persistent animal care and safety failures. Other roadside zoos in the state have comparably egregious records but continue to operate under valid USDA li-

censes. Exempting these facilities from Maryland's captive animal restrictions without reference to AWA compliance has created unnecessary threats to public safety and animal welfare.

What does this mean for Marylanders? For the state's policymakers, prohibiting chronic AWA violators from keeping deadly animals would help safeguard wildlife and communities. City and county officials may implement supplemental restrictions, as is explicitly allowed under Maryland's exotic animal law. For the public, it means that, aside from keeping only domestic animals as pets, visitors can make sure to patronize only animal exhibits where the animals are held humanely. This includes checking to see if a zoo has obtained Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation. As advocates work to strengthen federal law, Maryland can improve the lives of big cats and other animals by acting to keep these beautiful but dangerous animals out of unqualified hands. ●

Carson Barylak, Esq. is a Campaigns Manager at the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). She works to advance policies protecting wild animals, including animals in captivity.

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