

Councilmember
TONY CÁRDENAS

Sixth Council District



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES CÁRDENAS RESOLUTION CREATING FIRST EVER ELEPHANT AWARENESS DAY

LOS ANGELES — June 19, 2012 — Solidifying its commitment to animal welfare, the Los Angeles City Council Tuesday approved the city’s first ever “Elephant Awareness Day.” The landmark resolution, authored by Councilman Tony Cardenas, declares August 3, 2012 as Elephant Awareness Day, helping to draw attention to these animals which are considered a threatened species and often face abuse, neglect and even death when held in captivity.

“As the creator of the City of Los Angeles Animal Cruelty Task Force, I believe it is my duty to speak for animals who cannot speak for themselves and there is no animal more deserving of recognition then the elephant, so often subjected to horrible abuses and neglect,” said Councilman Tony Cardenas.

“The passage of this resolution helps Los Angeles maintain its reputation as a leader in animal welfare, compassionate and respectful of all animals.”

Elephants are among the most beloved members of the animal kingdom, attracting large audiences at zoos and circuses. However, these animals also suffer pain and suffering re when they are held in captivity. Young elephants are taken from the wild and are often put through “taming” sessions to prepare them for sale to owners who will many times confine them in torturously small spaces, causing mental and physical health problems and even prompting untimely deaths.

The Council also approved a commemorative resolution honoring 16-year-old Juliette West for her youth activism on behalf of elephants, locally and worldwide. Cardenas and Juliette West worked together on the campaign to release Billy the Elephant from the Los Angeles Zoo.

Despite her young age, Juliette is considered a leading animal activist, known by many as the “elephant girl” for her tireless efforts. Her activism has included elephants rescue missions in Thailand and she even starred in a documentary about her rescue efforts. Juliette has also spoken at dozens of events across the country for the last seven years, urging people to boycott elephant entertainment and she is forming a non-profit called JulietteSpeaks, to further public education and elephant rescue efforts.

“Elephant Awareness Day will be a great way to get people’s attention,” Juliette said.

“People think it sounds funny and ask what there is to know about elephants. But then they are shocked to find out that there is a lot to learn about how they are inhumanely treated, and how going to zoos and circuses helps to support the abuse of elephants. I hope and intend that Elephant Awareness Day will be part of the solution in helping to better the lives of elephants worldwide.”

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Animal activists applauded the city’s move and stressed the positive impact it will have for elephants everywhere.

“Awareness is the key to protecting and preserving these magnificent animals, whether it's learning about the suffering of elephants in captivity or taking action to conserve them in the wild,” said Catherine Doyle, Elephant Campaign Director for In Defense of Animals.

“We applaud Councilmember Cardenas, a true champion for elephants, and the Los Angeles City Council for establishing Elephant Awareness Day and also congratulate Juliette West for the special recognition she’s received from the Los Angeles City Council,” Doyle added.

“Her advocacy work on behalf of elephants is an inspiration to other young people and will lead the next generation to take action for elephants and make a meaningful difference in the world.”

Rachelle Owen, Manager of Youth Programs for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PETA, also applauded the city’s progressive action.

“Asking people to take a day to consider how they can help elephants—an animal who is loved yet notoriously abused in circuses and other industries—is groundbreaking and is a sign that we're moving towards a day when elephants are not kept in chains, denied basic rights, and instead are allowed to live out the natural lives in the wild where they were meant to be,” Owen said.

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