

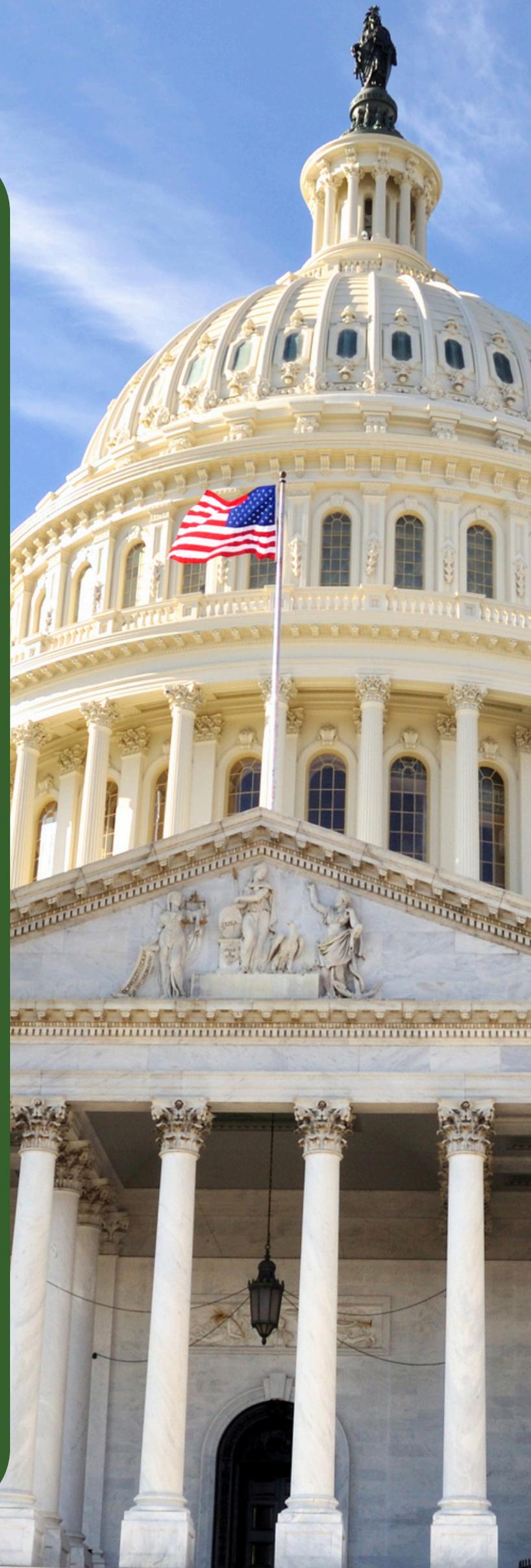


Feline  
Conservation  
Foundation

# GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS & ADVOCACY

## Member Toolkit 2026

This expanded toolkit is designed to equip FCF members, licensed wildlife professionals, and conservation partners with the knowledge, confidence, and tools needed to engage effectively with elected officials and their staff at the federal, state, and local levels.





## Why Advocacy Matters to FCF

Public policy decisions directly affect how licensed wildlife facilities operate, how animals are cared for, and how conservation outcomes are achieved. Wildlife laws are often written broadly, and without input from professionals, may unintentionally impact responsible animal care programs. By engaging in advocacy, FCF members help ensure lawmakers understand the difference between illegal activity and lawful, licensed conservation, education, and animal care operations.

## What Is Government Affairs?

Government affairs includes activities that educate lawmakers and regulators, build relationships, and provide professional expertise. These efforts shape legislation, regulations, and agency guidance long before a bill ever comes up for a vote.

## What Advocacy Is (and Is Not)

Advocacy does not require political alignment, campaign involvement, or lobbying registration. Sharing facts, professional experience, and local impact is not only allowed—it is encouraged.



Advocacy by licensed professionals is one of the most powerful tools available to shape science-based wildlife policy. Lawmakers rely heavily on trusted, local experts to understand how laws and regulations function in the real world.



## When to Engage Lawmakers

Members of Congress spend a significant portion of the year working in their home districts or states. These periods, commonly referred to as congressional recess, are the best opportunities for meaningful engagement.

District work periods allow lawmakers to see firsthand how federal policy affects constituents, local jobs, education programs, and licensed facilities in their communities.

### Ways to Engage During Recess

- Request a meeting at a district or state office
- Invite lawmakers or staff to tour a licensed wildlife facility
- Host or attend a town hall or community event
- Share local conservation success stories and economic impac

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## How to Set Up a Meeting With Your Representative

**Step 1: Identify the Right Office** - Determine whether your issue is best addressed by a U.S. Representative, U.S. Senator, or state legislator. Most meetings occur in district or state offices, not Washington, D.C.

**Step 2: Contact the Scheduler** - Call or email the district office and request the scheduler. Clearly explain that you are a constituent and represent a licensed wildlife facility or conservation organization.

**Step 3: Accept Staff Meetings** - Legislative assistants and policy advisors are deeply involved in shaping policy. A productive staff meeting is often more impactful than a brief meeting with the elected official.

**Step 4: Prepare Thoughtfully** - Bring a concise message, one or two clear requests, and a short leave-behind document. Focus on local impact and professional expertise.

### Tips for a Successful Meeting or Tour

- Show, don't tell: firsthand experiences are memorable and persuasive.
- Tailor your message to the lawmaker's interests such as jobs, education, or public safety.
- Keep meetings focused and respectful of time constraints.
- Include animal photo opportunities when appropriate.
- End with a clear, reasonable ask.

Within 48 hours of a meeting or visit, send a thank-you message summarizing key points discussed and reiterating any requests made. This step reinforces credibility and builds long-term relationships. Advocacy is an ongoing process. Continued communication, sharing updates, and offering to serve as a professional resource strengthens trust with lawmakers and staff over time.



## Legislative Priority: H.R.7159 Protecting Local Zoos Act of 2026

The Protecting Local Zoos Act of 2026 updates portions of the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to clarify how captive wildlife provisions apply to licensed wildlife facilities and professionals.

### Why This Bill Is Needed

Current interpretations of the Lacey Act were designed to combat illegal wildlife trafficking but may unintentionally affect lawful, licensed facilities. This creates regulatory uncertainty for professionals working under federal and state oversight.

### What the Bill Does

- Clarifies exemptions for properly licensed entities
- Recognizes licensed animal care staff and veterinary professionals
- Allows lawful conservation transfers under strict conditions
- Preserves enforcement authority against illegal activity

#### H.R.7159 - Protecting Local Zoos Act of 2026

119th Congress (2025-2026) | [Get alerts](#)

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**Sponsor:** [Rep. Gosar, Paul A. \[R-AZ-9\]](#) (Introduced 01/20/2026)

**Committees:** House - Natural Resources

**Latest Action:** House - 01/20/2026 Referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources. ([All Actions](#))

**Tracker:** i

### FCF Position

The Feline Conservation Foundation supports this legislation as a science-based clarification that protects animal welfare, supports licensed professionals, and ensures wildlife laws are applied as intended.