AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE



LEGISLATIVE HANDBOOK

rev. 1/26

★ ESTABLISHED IN 1974 ★

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HAGEN AVICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

HARI is proud to sponsor the American Federation of Aviculture Legislative Handbook

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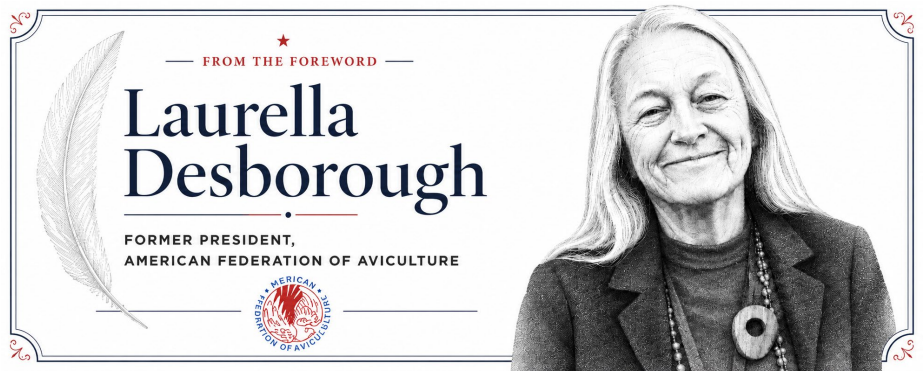
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Preface

In 1996, as President of the American Federation of Aviculture, Laurella Desborough, wrote a foreword to the organization's legislative handbook:

"Since the early 1970's the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) was established, one of its most important activities has been the effort to protect the interests and preserve the rights of aviculturists to keep and breed exotic birds through education of the public and of government officials. The major focus of AFA is on education. However, when the right to keep exotic birds becomes threatened, protecting that right through education becomes a primary focus...

This Legislative Handbook has become necessary because of the new proliferation of city and county laws and regulations concerning animals in general and birds in particular. In addition, many individuals have had to respond to complaints by neighbors and need to have help in that process. Many government officials know very little about birds and have misplaced concerns about disease and other issues they associate with birds. Therefore, a major task facing aviculturists is educating those who are writing laws and regulations. A corresponding task is to educate aviculturists about their rights as citizens and how they can best respond effectively to proposed laws and enforcement of local ordinances.

The goal of AFA is to provide assistance to aviculturists through this handbook so that they can continue to keep exotic birds and be able to effectively educate state and local officials about aviculture."

Today, in 2026, her words still ring true. Aviculture is still facing these issues at all levels of government, federal, state, county, and city. New proposed laws and regulations are surfacing almost daily. This handbook is a starting point for those new to advocating for our rights as aviculturists and a refresher for our seasoned veterans. Please join us in the fight to protect our right to keep exotic birds.

Jodie Olmos
Legislative Vice President
The American Federation Of Aviculture
January 2026

Mission and Purpose

Mission

The mission and purpose of The American Federation of Aviculture shall be to promote the advancement of Aviculture through educational programs that support the advancement and improvement of breeding practices, husbandry practices, and living conditions for exotic birds, conservation, research and legislative awareness.

What is The American Federation of Aviculture?

The American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) is a United States Federally Registered 501 (C)3 non-profit national organization established in 1974, whose purpose is to represent all aspects of aviculture and to educate the public about keeping and breeding birds in captivity.

AFA has a membership consisting of bird breeders, pet bird owners, avian veterinarians, pet/bird store owners, bird product manufacturers, and other people interested in the future of aviculture.

AFA defines anyone keeping exotic birds in captivity as an “aviculturist” but AFA advocates that this designation carries with it certain responsibilities transcending those of the owners of domesticated pets like dogs and cats.

AFA has been recognized by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species as a NGO allowed to provide input related U.S. involvement in the CITES treaty.

AFA believes holders of exotic birds need to be aware of the special needs of the species they hold, be aware of their conservation status, up-to-date research findings enhancing the well-being of the birds, and the state and federal regulations pertaining to exotic birds.

What Can I Do About Legislative Issues?

- **Identify your Federal, State and Local elected officials**
  - This website may be used for your search
    - http://www.usa.gov/elected-officials
- **Contact your legislators**
  - Send a letter of introduction stating your position on animal ownership, sales, etc. (see below for tips on letter writing)
    - Do this before an issue arises so you can build a positive relationship
  - If possible, arrange a face-to-face meeting to explain your position
    - If you can't meet with your elected officials sometimes a meeting with a legislative assistant can be effective
  - Host a gathering of animal welfare supporters and invite your legislators. This puts them in a room full of people who support your cause.
- **Be Vigilant**
  - Legislation can pop up and change on a daily basis
  - There are several approaches legislators may take when introducing bills concerning animals. The bill may be in the form of a pet sale ban, a pet ownership ban/restriction. It may also be a proposed amendment to an existing bills or laws with changes in definitions, or the addition of species/categories of animals.
  - Check your state and local legislative schedules at least weekly (better every few days) for any changes or additions to the schedule. We often have very little notice when committee hearings are scheduled.
  - Get the word out. When a bill or ordinance is proposed act quickly. Be sure to do your research to avoid unnecessary panic.
    - Contact people in your state, county or city/town who could be affected by the proposed legislation. This includes but is not limited to store owners/employees, pet owners, breeders, rescues, manufacturers.
    - Contact your AFA State Coordinator, Regional Director, and the Legislative Vice President. It may feel like overkill to contact them all but it gets more eyes on the situation.
    - To identify your State Coordinator and Regional Director go to https://afabirds.org/2018WordPress/afa-regional-contacts-and-affiliatedorganizations/

WHEN LEGISLATION THREATENS YOUR BIRDS

A QUICK-ACTION GUIDE FOR AVICULTURISTS

1. **DON'T PANIC — READ THE ACTUAL BILL OR ORDINANCE.**
   Know what is being proposed, how it is written, and what it would actually do.
2. **IDENTIFY EXACTLY WHO AND WHAT WOULD BE AFFECTED.**
   Understand the scope, the impact on aviculturists, businesses, rescues, and the community.
3. **CONTACT YOUR AFA STATE COORDINATOR, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, AND LEGISLATIVE VP.**
   Early communication helps us coordinate a strong, timely response.
4. **GATHER FACTS, LOCAL IMPACT, AND RESPECTFUL TALKING POINTS.**
   Use accurate information and real-life stories to educate decision makers.
5. **ALERT AFFECTED AVICULTURISTS, BUSINESSES, RESCUES, AND BIRD OWNERS.**
   The more informed our community, the stronger our collective voice.
6. **SUBMIT CLEAR WRITTEN COMMENTS AND ATTEND/TESTIFY AT HEARINGS.**
   Your voice matters. Be concise, respectful, and solution-focused.
7. **STAY PROFESSIONAL, FACTUAL, AND UNITED.**
   Civility and accuracy build credibility and win allies. Together, we can protect our rights and our birds.

OUR BIRDS.
OUR RIGHTS.
OUR RESPONSIBILITY.

TOGETHER, WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

NEED HELP OR MORE INFORMATION?
Visit AFABirds.org/legislation | legislativevp@afabirds.org

What Else Can I Do?

- **Testify -** The more people that show up at hearings the more attention an issue gets. As a united front all aviculturists need to stand up for the right to have birds in our lives. (see page for tips on how to testify)
- **Educate -** Some aviculturists are less familiar with legislative issues than others. Take time to discuss legislative issues with colleagues and fellow pet owners. You can even chat about these issues with people not directly affected as they may have a stake in things you are unaware of. Be honest and dispel the myths being perpetuated by Animal Rights supporters.

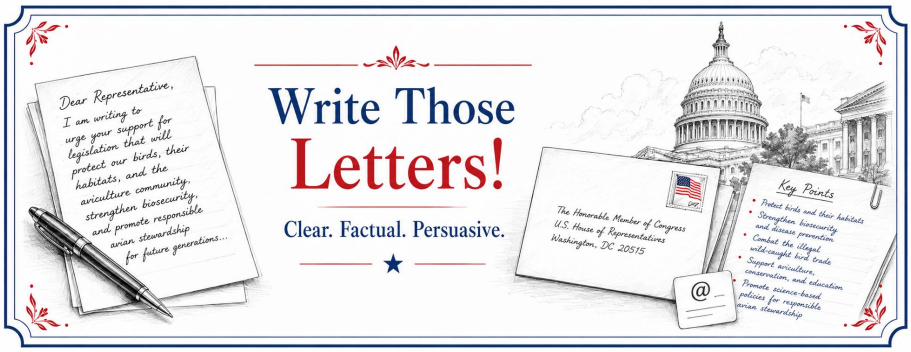


Letter Writing Tips

- Before you write your letter gather as much information on the bill, author/sponsors and the history of the issue in that particular arena
  - When was the bill introduced? Is this new or a carry over from a prior session?
  - What steps forward has the bill taken so far?
  - Does the bill contain language that can be expanded in the future to include birds? Language like “including but not limited to”, or “dangerous, exotic animals”?
  - Make sure you are clear on the definitions of terms like exotic, wild, domestic or dangerous.
  - Read the proposed bill very carefully to check for any changes in wording like a change from a specific animal to a list with very few exclusions ie: “animal” changed to “any vertebrate except humans” Also note changes in species or additions since prior reading of the bill.
  - Who is the sponsor and what is their voting history?
    - What type of bills do they typically support? This will help you plan your approach?
    - Have they sponsored similar bills in the past and have they been successful?
- Once you have looked at the proposed bill from the legislative view look at it from the impact view.
  - Who could possibly be affected and how?
  - What are the potential financial impacts on the community or state?
    - Income - loss of sales for businesses, loss of tax revenue for the county, state or municipality
    - Employment - loss of jobs, loss of employees resulting in a cascade effect with loss of revenue for retailers and other industries
    - Manufacturing revenue
  - What are the non-financial impacts on the community or state?
    - Loss of available service animals
    - Loss of freedom to choose where to obtain a pet
    - Loss of opportunity to educate students about animals

Write Those Letters!

- When writing your letter always stick to the facts. Some emotion can add to your argument but too much can tip the scales away from the validity of your cause
- Take a point-by-point approach.
- Keep things short and to the point. Legislators and their staff do not have time to read mini novels. They get hundreds of letters daily and they need to see your point right away.
- Use of industry or flowery language doesn't help your cause. You may be familiar with industry terms but if you choose to use them you may need to take time to explain them for your reader.
- Use statistics. This is where your research can help. Statistics is a language legislators can relate to. Things like the number of households impacted, the amount of revenue generated by the pet industry and the potential loss of income. How many constituents are affected?
- Always thank the addressee for their time and consideration of your point of view. It never hurts to be polite.
    - Address one issue at a time by stating the issue then explaining why that should or should not become law.
    - Be organized in your writing. Create an outline first and then fill it in with your letter.
    - Once your letter is complete if you have time let it sit for a bit then proofread it. After doing that let it sit again and reread to see if you would like to add or remove anything. Once you're satisfied have a colleague or family member read it. Final step - Send it out.
    - In today's tech world you can email it to the appropriate parties. If you send to more than one person please take the time to change the salutation. You can also send a copy via post office so there is another chance to get it in front of the correct person.



Tips on Testifying

- Use the same techniques to research for testimony as you did for writing your letter. If you wrote a letter your job is halfway done.
- Be sure to look into the particular requirements for testifying in that city/town, county or state. Many requirements can affect your approach.
    - Do you need to be a resident?
    - Do you need to pre-register or create an account?
    - Can you testify online and what are those guidelines?
    - Can more than one person testify representing an organization?
    - Can you present as a panel and does that allow you more time?
    - What is the time limit for each speaker?
- Write out your testimony. If you are unable to complete your statement in the allotted time or you get removed from the schedule you can always submit written testimony to the committee. This is where you can expand when time is limited.
- Practice your testimony to ensure that you can get things stated in the allotted time. The more you practice the less likely you are to race through your statement. Your familiarity with your testimony should help put you at ease.
- Always be professional
    - Your language doesn't need to be fancy but it should never be vulgar. Don't include language that is difficult for you to pronounce or that might cause you to stumble over words. You want them to hear you loud and clear.
    - Dress the part. If you want to be taken seriously your appearance does count. You don't have to be in a suit and tie if that makes you uncomfortable but please be sure to wear clean, neat attire. We know this sounds like common knowledge but we sometimes forget the image we can portray to the non-avicultural world.
    - Remember to thank the members of the committee for their time and attention.



STRONGER TOGETHER

PROTECT ★ EDUCATE ★ PRESERVE

Your membership in AFA helps protect our rights, our birds, and our future.





AFA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY
AFA monitors and fights legislation that threatens our right to keep and breed exotic birds.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
Access to articles, webinars, and publications that promote responsible aviculture.

A VOICE THAT MATTERS
Be part of a national network of aviculturists working together to protect our hobby and our birds.

ACTION ALERTS
Stay informed with timely alerts so you can take action when it matters most.

AVIAN WELFARE
Support programs and initiatives that promote responsible bird care, and enhance the wellbeing of birds.

TOGETHER, WE CAN **PROTECT OUR RIGHTS.** TOGETHER, WE CAN SECURE OUR FUTURE.

★ JOIN AFA TODAY! ★

Stand up. Speak out. Make a difference.
Your membership helps safeguard aviculture for generations to come.

JOIN ONLINE: AFABirds.org

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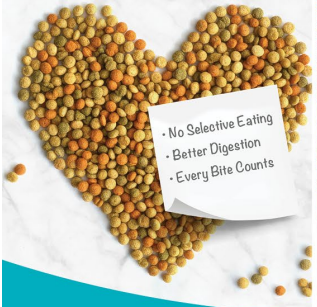
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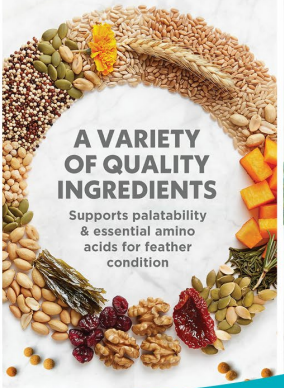
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