

CHRISSIE HYNDE

September 21, 2011

Mayor Frank G. Jackson
Cleveland City Hall

Dear Mayor Jackson:

For decades, I've toured the world with The Pretenders, singing the praises of Ohio, and I've always returned to my home state a few times a year to remain an engaged citizen. One thing that heartens me is the enormous interest in protecting animals in Ohio. That's why I'm writing in advance of Ringling Bros.' October 17 to 23 stint at Cleveland's Quicken Loans Arena to ask that you ensure that Ohio's absolute ban on the use of prods to control animals be enforced to prohibit Ringling's use of bullhooks. The use of these sharp weapons on elephants, whose skin is so sensitive that they can feel flies biting them and swat them away with their tails, is not only cruel but also unnecessary, as evidenced by the Cleveland Zoo's decision to handle the elephants it exhibits with "protected contact," a system that precludes the use of bullhooks.

Ringling trainers have repeatedly been documented abusing elephants with bullhooks. [Images](#) from Ringling's training facility that were published in an exposé by [The Washington Post](#) show frightened baby elephants as they are gouged with these sharp metal rods during violent training sessions. [A PETA undercover investigation](#) also documented Ringling handlers as they struck elephants moments before walking on stage in order to keep them in constant fear of punishment. In fact, earlier this year, an elephant biologist observed an elephant during a Ringling show who was "quickly hooked in the rear and then again on the hind leg and made to lie on the ground" when the animal did not perform a trick on time.

Not only are Ringling handlers routinely using these unlawful devices, they are also using them to beat sick elephants in order to force them to perform. Just this summer, the USDA cited Ringling for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to an elephant suffering from a chronic infection that was causing discharge from her vulva and for forcing another elephant to perform while she was suffering from severe diarrhea and intestinal pain. Both of these elephants are scheduled to perform in Cleveland, as are a number of elephants who suffer from painful arthritis.

All these actions are prohibited by Ohio law, which states that "no person shall directly or indirectly or by aiding, abetting, or permitting the doing thereof put, place, fasten, use, or fix upon or to any work animal used or readied for use for a work purpose ... electric or other prods, or similar devices." Ohio Revised Code § 959.20. The definition of "work animal" unequivocally includes animals used in circuses. Thus, *any* use of a bullhook is prohibited.

Please don't allow Ohio's anti-cruelty law to be selectively enforced. These endangered elephants will soon be in your jurisdiction. My friends at PETA and I join animal advocates across the state in asking for your leadership so that Ringling will be held to the same standards as all animal exhibitors who pass through our home state. I look forward to hearing from you. I can be reached through PETA's Senior Vice President Dan Mathews at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



Chrissie Hynde