



SOMEBODY HERE NEEDS YOU.



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

December 3, 2007

Linda E. Stiff
Acting IRS Commissioner
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Stiff:

On behalf of the Michigan Humane Society and The Humane Society of the United States, we are writing to alert you to an IRS auction of exotic animals about to take place in Michigan, and ask that you stop this auction until questions about the welfare of the animals can be addressed.

According to the auction announcement (at http://www.ustreas.gov/auctions/irs/demi_pet%20_1711.htm), the animals to be sold include pythons, boas, snakes, lizard, bearded dragon, tarantulas, tortoises, turtles, salamanders, frogs, iguana, sugar glider, coati, African porcupine, wallaby, Patagonian cavy, hedgehogs, chinchillas, macaws, parrot, crow, parakeets, land invertebrates, marine invertebrates, eel, and fish.

Live animals simply should not be sold to the highest bidder like other property. Particularly when it comes to exotic animals, most individuals cannot provide the care they need in captivity, and the animals may pose a risk to public health and safety. In certain jurisdictions, it is illegal to possess some of these animals as pets.

We understand the condition of these animals is unknown. Before a sale is even considered, the condition of the animals should be assessed. Depending on the condition, cruelty charges may be appropriate, and it may not be appropriate to transport or place the animals.

In addition, potential buyers should be assessed for whether they can provide lifetime care for the animals and protect the public from potential risks. The consequences of a mistake can be tragic. In recent years, two people have been killed by their pet pythons, for example. Even the tiniest turtle carries Salmonella. This year an infant died from Salmonella exposure related to a pet turtle. Because of the disease risk, federal health regulations prohibit the sale of small turtles.

Ideally, exotic animals seized by the IRS would not be sold but would be placed appropriately, such as in reputable sanctuaries or accredited zoos. Although space in such facilities is limited, the option should be fully explored. The Michigan Humane Society has a network it can contact through the Michigan Partnership for Animal Welfare in this regard.

We realize our suggestions are different from how the IRS usually conducts business. These are living creatures, and they should be treated differently. We urge you to take quick action to suspend the auction, in the interests of animal welfare and ultimately the American public.

Sincerely,

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