

The SLOTHS Act

A LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING ON THE U.S. TRADE IN WILD-CAUGHT SLOTHS

Stopping Legalized Organized Trafficking and Harm to Sloths Act of 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE COMMERCIAL WILD-CAUGHT SLOTH TRADE IS UNSUSTAINABLE BECAUSE:

- **IT KILLS MOST OF THE ANIMALS IT TAKES:** 90% of sloths removed from the wild for this industry die before reaching US soil.
- **IT IS INHERENTLY CRUEL:** Babies are taken from their mothers at a very young age and fed inappropriate diets, such as rice, that are known to cause long-term health problems.
- **IT DECEIVES THE AMERICAN PUBLIC:** Most people don't realize that the sloths in captive encounters and pet shops were caught in the wild, and most don't support removing animals from the wild for entertainment.
- **IT HAS ZERO CONSERVATION VALUE:** Sloths sold into the commercial trade aren't part of any accredited breeding, research, or release program, and none are ever returned to the wild. Removing them only depletes wild populations.
- **IT ENDANGERS THE PUBLIC:** Sloths can inflict serious bites and may transmit disease.

9 out of 10

sloths don't survive the capture and trade

1,146 Sloths Imported into the U.S.

between 2011 and 2021

99.56%

of the sloths are taken from the wild

WHAT THE BILL COULD ACCOMPLISH

STOPPING LEGALIZED ORGANIZED TRAFFICKING AND HARM TO SLOTHS, or the SLOTHS Act of 2026

END COMMERCIAL IMPORTS: Prohibit the importation of sloths for commercial exhibition, animal encounters, and the exotic pet industry.

PROTECT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH: Allow deceased sloth specimens to be imported for scientific research.

SUPPORT CONSERVATION BREEDING: Permit eligible captive sloths to be transferred to AZA-accredited institutions for breeding programs, provided the animals were not taken from the wild after enactment.

ESTABLISH MEANINGFUL PENALTIES: Introduce civil penalties of up to \$20,000, criminal fines of up to \$100,000 for knowing violations, and provisions for forfeiture of illegally imported animals and cancellation of applicable federal authorizations.

PROPOSED CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

We are asking Members of Congress to cosponsor the SLOTHS Act and support its progress through the legislative process. By passing the SLOTHS Act, the United States can demonstrate leadership in animal welfare and encourage other countries to protect wild sloths from commercial exploitation.

THE SLOTHS ACT IS ENDORSED BY

- Sloth Conservation Foundation
- The Sloth Institute
- The Association of Zoos and Aquariums
- The Animal Welfare Institute
- The Animal Legal Defense Fund
- International Fund for Animal Welfare

WHY CONGRESS SHOULD ACT:

The failed commercial attraction Sloth World provoked public outrage over the deaths of the imported sloths and the commercial trade behind them. Central to that concern is the removal of wild animals from their natural habitats to supply an entertainment attraction.

Even within the exotic pet sector, support for excluding wild-caught animals from sale is strong. A U.S. study published in 2026 found that approximately 80% of surveyed exotic pet owners, breeders, and sellers supported allowing only captive-bred animals to be sold (Pratt et al., 2026).



| THE SLOTH PROTECTION ALLIANCE