

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson  
Chairman  
House Agriculture Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway  
Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway,

We write to urge the House Agriculture Committee to consider and favorably report H.R. 1042, the “Providing Responsible Emergency Plans for Animals at Risk of Emerging Disasters Act” or “PREPARED Act” to the full House. This legislation will require entities regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) to have contingency plans in place to safely care for animals in a disaster or emergency. Currently supported by over 200 bipartisan cosponsors in the House, the PREPARED Act is a simple and straightforward step toward keeping animals safe in disasters.

This month, the nation’s emergency responders deployed to assist communities affected by severe flooding along the Mississippi River. We appreciate the tireless work that emergency managers, first responders, and volunteer organizations around the country undertake to keep communities safe during disasters. As we strive to keep our families and communities safe, we must remember how essential it is to include animals in disaster planning.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Congress passed the Pet Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act, a law requiring that state and localities develop emergency plans to address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals. While the PETS Act was a step forward for pet owners, it did not account for commercially owned animals at facilities regulated under the AWA.

To protect animals in institutional settings, the USDA in December 2012 published a final rule requiring AWA-regulated entities such as commercial animal dealers, exhibitors, and research facilities to take additional steps to prepare for disaster situations, both natural and manmade. However, on July 31, 2013, just before the rule was to go into effect, USDA issued an indefinite stay of implementation of the final rule. Even after finalizing further regulatory flexibility for AWA licensees in June 2018, USDA’s lack of action since 2013 has left animals in facilities licensed under the AWA at risk.

The PREPARED Act would essentially codify the requirements of USDA’s delayed rule by requiring entities licensed and regulated under the AWA to develop plans detailing how they will respond to and recover from potential disasters or other emergencies that could affect the animals in their care. Testimony in favor of the legislation was heard before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management on February 12, 2020 during a discussion on how animals are impacted during disasters.

In the few short months before another hurricane season begins, we urge the Committee to swiftly consider and report the PREPARED Act. For more information, please contact Christine Godinez ([Christine.Godinez@mail.house.gov](mailto:Christine.Godinez@mail.house.gov)) in the office of Congresswoman Titus or George Pollack ([George.Pollack@mail.house.gov](mailto:George.Pollack@mail.house.gov)) in the office of Congressman King. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Peter T. King  
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Jim Costa, Chair, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture

The Honorable David Rouzer, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture