



## **House Approves Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act; Bill Awaits President's Signature**

The House of Representatives passed the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) (S.3880) Monday on a voice vote. The legislation, approved by the Senate in September, awaits President Bush's signature.

Current federal law makes it illegal for activists to damage animal research organizations, farms, zoos, pet stores and other similar operations. The new bill extends those prohibitions to interfering with third-party organizations such as insurance companies, law firms, investment houses, vendors and others that do business with animal enterprises. Additionally, AETA calls for fines and/or imprisonment of animal rights advocates who threaten scientists conducting animal research or companies funding or affiliated with it. Violators could be sentenced up to a year in jail for economic damages of less than \$10,000, and up to five years in prison if a threat produced a "reasonable fear" of bodily harm. Prison sentences of up to 10 years could result if someone is actually injured.

In a press release, NABR predicted that the new law will counter "the climate of fear that presently surrounds medical discovery and the research enterprise." However, animal rights activists believe the measure is too restrictive. A statement from The Humane Society of the United States says that the law will criminalize as terrorism "a broad range of lawful, constitutionally protected, and valuable activity," including demonstrations that block the doors of a facility and cause it to lose money.

A different view of the legislation was voiced by Jerry Vlasak, spokesman for the North American Animal Liberation Press Office. Vlasak told the United Press International that he thought the bill would have little impact on animal rights activists.

"As far as the underground liberation movement, it won't have any impact at all because they don't really care about those laws," Vlasak said. "Their activities -- sabotaging, liberating animals - - are already illegal so just adding one more law won't make much difference." The legislation's effect on the above ground movement would also be muted, Vlasak said. "I don't think it's going to make a huge difference in the above ground movement because they've (law enforcement) already gone after people who were conducting effective protest campaigns," he said. The net effect on the above ground movement is that it could "make people more seriously consider going underground," he added.

*United Press International*, November 14, 2006

[Analysis: Bill targets animal activists](#)