T he HSUS is pleased to announce that former U. S. Senator John Melcher of Montana will be assisting us as a legislative consultant on critical issues. Sen. Melcher, a veterinarian and a strong proponent of animal protection, was the author of a 1985 Animal Welfare Act amendment which states that anyone subject to the Act must provide for the psychological well-being of primates and a 1989 National Institutes of Health (NIH) appropriations amendment prohibiting NIH grant recipients from using chimpanzees taken from the wild. It is a boost for animal-protection efforts to have this talented and dedicated senator working with us. During this congressional session, The HSUS will continue to benefit from the political skills of former U. S. Senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts. Sen. Tsongas will continue as a consultant to The HSUS on laboratory-animal issues.

EMERGENCY ACTION NEEDED

On February 16, 1989, a coalition of animal-welfare and conservation organizations, led by The HSUS, submitted a petition to the U. S. Department of the Interior to list the African elephant as an endangered species. Fifty years ago, there were millions of African elephants. As recently as 1981, there were estimated to be 1,200,000 elephants in Africa, which dwindled to less than 800,000 in 1987 (see the Spring 1988 HSUS News). Recent reports place the current number at just under 400,000. Unless the ivory trade is ended, the African elephant may become virtually extinct in five to ten years. The vast majority of all ivory on the world market, including the ivory the United States imports, is from poached elephants. The United States should set an example that the rest of the world will quickly follow. While the recently passed Elephant Conservation Act of 1988 bans the import of ivory from certain countries, additional action by the Interior Department is also needed. Should the secretary of the interior list the elephant as an endangered species immediately, it will prohibit all commercial trade in ivory in the United States. Please write Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr., at: Department of Interior, 18th and C Streets, NW, Washington, DC 20240, and ask him to take emergency action to list the African elephant as an endangered species. Also, urge your legislators to send letters to Secretary Lujan seeking emergency action on the petition.

MORATORIUM NEEDS SUPPORT

The HSUS will again be back­ ing legislation in 1989 to impose a moratorium on the patenting of genetically altered animals. Although the moratorium bills introduced by Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon and Representative Charlie Rose of Maryland faced a long road in Congress, the House Judiciary Committee, chaired by Rep. Robert Kastenmeier of Wisconsin, will again be back­ ing legislation in 1989 to impose a moratorium on the patenting of genetically altered animals.

Dr. Susan Lieberman, of The HSUS, and former senator John Mel­ cher testify to have the african elephant declared endangered.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

While the One-hundred­ first Congress is in its early stages, efforts are already underway to legislate on a variety of animal issues. Rep. Toby Roth of Wisconsin has introduced H.R. 425, which would amend the Animal Welfare Act to enable the House of Representatives a pas­ sable substitute bill introduced by Rep. Kastenmeier. The bill might have discouraged extensive genetic engineering of farm animals because it exempted farmers from patent royalties on the offspring of these animals, but, predictably, even this simple bill was opposed by the biotechnology industry. Since it was not possible to get the House Judiciary Patents Subcommittee to consider it in the last Congress, The HSUS is a member of a coalition of animal-protection groups, farm groups, environmental groups, public-interest organizations, and religious leaders that agree that animal patenting is a controversial issue. We believe a moratorium should be imposed while the ethical, animal-suffering, environ­ mental, and economic ramifications of genetically altered animals are thoroughly studied and laws and regula­ tions established to appropri­ately deal with these problems. Please let your federal legis­ lators know that you are con­ cerned about the implications of patenting and ask them to co­ sponsor the bill.

Economic sanctions against countries that violate international fishery conservation agreements would help protect marine mamm­ als from the harmful effects of driftnet fishing.

Looming on the horizon is a fight to reform the Unrelated Business Income Tax (UBIT), which could have a direct negative impact on activities of animal shelters and charitable animal hospitals. Currently, a humane society’s income from providing veterinary services (with the exception of such procedures as grooming) to the public for free or at a cost plus 10 percent rate is not subject to the UBIT tax. The House Ways and Means Subcommittee, encour­ aged by members of the veterinary community, wants to revamp the law so that it exempts only emergency medical care, sterilization, and public health measures, such as anti­ rabies shots, from UBIT taxes. Hence, a portion of clinical operations could be subject to the UBIT taxes.

Reform of the UBIT tax could allow unnecessary ramifications, subjecting shelters and chari­ table animal hospitals to state taxation. Furthermore, it could undermine donors’ abil­ ity to receive federal tax deduc­ tions for gifts of food, supplies, and goods to animal shelters.

Any member of The House of Representatives should be opposed.

The HSUS and the Michigan Humane Society have been leading the fight to block changes in UBIT. It is important that you write your legislators to stress that any reform of the UBIT law should not undermine shelters’ and charitable animal hospitals’ ability to serve the community and should be opposed.

Any representative may be reached c/o the House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.