

A statement from Kitty Block, Acting President & CEO for The Humane Society of the United States:

Facing an increasingly competitive state and national landscape, we are suspending efforts on our citizens' initiative to ban trophy hunting of wild cats in Arizona. This difficult decision is the result of a perfect storm of local obstacles and emerging national issues and does not reflect Arizona voters' enthusiasm for this proposal to ban inhumane trophy hunting practices.

We are so very grateful to the hundreds of volunteers who collected tens of thousands of signatures and to our coalition partners that joined The HSUS in this effort. I can only imagine how disappointing this news must be for you, and I am sorry. HB2244 and HB2404, which were passed last year by the Arizona legislature have had a detrimental and chilling effect on grassroots initiatives like ours – making volunteer gathering more difficult due to the onerous strict compliance standard and causing paid petitioners too costly to hire.

This burden is compounded by national issues that currently demand our attention. There are increasing challenges facing wild animals at the federal level, and key government agencies have become ever more complicit in the wanton killing of wildlife by trophy hunters and others. This dramatic urgency at the federal level makes a more concentrated effort on national legislative and litigation strategies essential. We also believe that those approaches will hold much greater promise for the protection of wildlife in the immediate future. The record backs this up. In recent years, humane advocates have restored protections for gray wolves under the Endangered Species Act; successfully fought against attempts by Congress to remove those protections; defeated multiple attempts to increase trophy hunting of bears, bobcats, and mountain lions; and fought the imports of African lion and elephant trophies by American trophy hunters. With partners at the national and regional level, we'll do still more. We must, and are, currently increasing resources on that front.

We're disappointed in this outcome, but we look forward to rejoining this and other battles in the state in the future. Together, we've built a grassroots movement for wildlife, a movement that is strong, dedicated, and well-organized. We'll continue to advocate for animals and redouble our efforts to introduce necessary reforms at the Arizona Game and Fish Department, too often the creature of special interests including trophy hunters and trappers. And we'll continue to raise awareness about the cruelty of trophy hunting and trapping and build public support for future reforms.

Kellye Pinkleton, director of the initiative, said, "We have been truly overwhelmed with the support the campaign has received in the state and around the nation. Our incredible volunteers and coalition partners have done a remarkable job of educating communities throughout Arizona, from Maricopa County to Yavapai County to Navajo County. These citizen educators have shared the cruelty inflicted upon mountain lions and bobcats through trophy hunting and trapping with a broader public. We thank all of our wild cat protectors for their selfless dedication to protecting Arizona's wildlife and their dedication to stopping the senseless killing of Arizona's wild cats. It is clear that the growing grassroots movement our supporters have helped build is not going away."

Please join us for an All-Volunteer call next Thursday at 6pm where Kitty Block will be joining the HSUS Wildlife team and campaign staff who will be available if you have questions or comments. Please email [info@azforwildlife.com](mailto:info@azforwildlife.com) for conference call details.