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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

House Overwhelming Approves Animal Crush Video Ban Bill

Washington, DC (July 21, 2010) – The Animal Welfare Institute commends the U.S. House of Representatives for its overwhelming bipartisan vote today—416-3—in favor of H.R. 5566, a bill to outlaw trafficking in “crush videos,” a particularly depraved product that depicts women in stilettos or their bare feet literally crushing, stomping on, or impaling small helpless animals to satisfy sadistic viewers with a bizarre sexual fetish.

In May, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the original law, 18 U.S.C. §48, enacted in 1999. In a case involving animal fighting videos, the Court ruled that Section 48, which criminalized commerce in depictions of animal cruelty, was “substantially overbroad and therefore invalid under the First Amendment” for potentially affecting materials pertaining to legal activities, such as hunting, even though no such prosecution had ever been attempted.

In its decision, however, the Court explicitly did not explicitly say whether a narrower law would be unconstitutional. H.R. 5566 was thus very narrowly crafted to prohibit interstate and foreign sales and distribution only of “crush videos” as obscene depictions of illegal acts.

AWI President Cathy Liss praised the sponsors of the bill, Representative Elton Gallegly (D-CA), who also sponsored the original legislation, and Representative Gary Peters (D-MI), as well as the members of the House Judiciary Committee, including Subcommittee Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA) and full Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-MI), and the House leadership. “Everyone worked very hard to put this legislation on the fast track in order to shut down the crush video market that emerged again after the Supreme Court decision,” she said. “We urge the Senate to act just as swiftly and send this bill to the President as soon as possible.”

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