

Good Morning, My name is Clay Thomas;

First, let me apologize if I seem a little disheveled this morning as I only found about SB97 yesterday morning.

I originally testified back in 2006 when the dangerous animal law was passed. It was certainly something I had hoped to never have to do again.

In 1999, my wife and her Boy Scout troop had purchased an overnight "Camp Package" from a small private zoo here in Kansas. Part of the package included a photo shoot with various animals. During the shoot, a Siberian tiger grabbed my wife by the right hand and pulled it into the cage, severing her arm at the elbow. The arm was saved and she regained partial use after 13 surgeries.

The photo taken seconds before the incident is an incredibly good one! The children all lined up in front of and against the cage, my wife at the end holding her right hand up, which happens to be right in front of the tigers face. The few seconds that followed certainly changed all of our lives.

What happened to us was an accident. The owner of the tiger loved his animals very much and was trying to do what he thought was best for them. He had raised this animal from a cub. Unfortunately, you cannot domesticate an animal in one generation. Animals come with instincts and they are going to do what comes naturally to them.

I fail to understand how a forty-pound weight limit makes a wild animal safe. I've now spent considerable time "Googling" how much various animals weigh and I just don't understand this recommendation. Looking back on our own situation, I wonder why we would ever put out children within inches of a huge tiger or any wild animal. I guess we put our trust and faith in the guide who's showing us the animal. I'm positive the trainers and guides dearly love the animal they are showing but are unable to fully and completely guarantee the animals inherent instincts can be restrained.

Even now, I carry considerable guilt over our incident. After the accident we did nothing but take care of ourselves. We only looked within our own situation. I failed to think of others. In 2006, when I testified before both the Senate and House committees, I sat next to parents that lost their beautiful daughter during a photo session with a tiger. If I had taken the initiative immediately after our accident to begin the process of limiting public access to wild and dangerous animals maybe those grieving parents would

not of had to of been there. Just maybe that accident would of never happened.

I therefore beg of you to not pass SB97. If passed, at some point in the future something will happen again. Someone will be hurt or someone will be killed and it will be you who will have to bear the burden of guilt on reflection of this occasion. Please take my experience into consideration and trust me when I tell you that burden is enormous.

Thank You,
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