

In early November, as I listened carefully from a middle row in the ornate and compact gallery of the U.S. Supreme Court, the justices peppered lawyers with questions about a case that provided a disturbing glimpse into the harsh realities of industrialized agriculture.

A 2008 HSUS undercover investigation had exposed ghastly mishandling of “downer cows” at a California slaughter plant, prompting the largest meat recall in American history and an upgrade to the state’s anti-cruelty law. The meat industry challenged the law in the nation’s highest court, which by spring will decide whether California has the authority to ban commerce in farm animals too sick or injured to walk.

It’s been only about two years since I sat in the same gallery listening to arguments about a different HSUS-backed measure: a federal ban on the sale of videos depicting extreme cruelty, including so-called “animal crush” videos. In *U.S. v. Stevens*, a notorious peddler of dogfighting videos sought to overturn the law on First Amendment grounds. Though the Supreme Court ruled narrowly in his favor, The HSUS quickly closed the door again on this cruel commerce by securing enactment of a more carefully tailored federal statute.

Prior to these two court proceedings, no animal protection issues had come before the Supreme Court in more than two decades. But because of The HSUS’s relentless focus on reform, as well as the defensive maneuvers by animal-use industries, two cases came before the court in rapid succession.

More broadly, the cases are a tangible sign of the penetration of humane values into the marrow of American society. Working in Congress and state legislatures to create a legal framework of protections for animals, we have shepherded the passage of nearly 1,000 laws to protect animals in the last decade or so. Our issues are prominent in both traditional and emerging media platforms. Scientists and technical experts work to implement humane solutions through their research and its practical applications. Pastors and preachers reinforce our compassionate principles from their pulpits. Teachers share humane ideals in thousands of schools. Every major corporation with a stake in animal protection knows of The HSUS, and just about all of them consider either the possibility of collaboration or the risks associated with not doing so.

My 2011 book, *The Bond: Our Kinship with Animals, Our Call to Defend Them*, found its way onto nearly all of the major best-seller lists.

When people learn about society’s mistreatment of animals, they are typically shocked that such behavior still occurs or is still legal. That was certainly the case when a notorious exotic animal owner released more than 50 tigers, lions, and other captive wild animals in central Ohio. For years, The HSUS had been warning of the perils of private citizens keeping dangerous exotics. There should have been a law in Ohio, and in fact, we had been clamoring for one for years. After this tragic event, many opinion leaders remembered we’d been right all along.

At The HSUS, we are not bystanders or passive observers. We are driving the debate and framing the issues as we seek to build a truly humane society. We are reminding policymakers, corporations, and others that we can and must do better—and that we are backed by millions of Americans like you who believe, as we do, that animals deserve our compassion and mercy.



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↑ FOR REGULAR UPDATES—
and Wayne’s podcast
with author and radio show
host Tracie Hotchner—
check out his blog at
humanesociety.org/wayne.

The Supreme Court cases are a tangible sign of the penetration of humane values into the marrow of American society.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Pacelle". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Wayne Pacelle, President & CEO
The Humane Society of the United States