

FEDERAL REPORT

NEW CONGRESS, NEW HOPES FOR SUCCESS

The first official meeting of the 103rd Congress, on January 5, marked significant changes in Congress itself. The most new members since 1948 joined the Congress: 14 senators and 112 representatives (including delegates). With a combination of fresh talent and seasoned expertise in the Congress and new Clinton administration, The HSUS is optimistic that favorable developments on our issues are possible.

One critical concern this year is the reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), which provides the nation's most comprehensive protection for marine mammals. The MMPA was first passed by Congress in 1972; it must be reauthorized every four years. In response to depleted marine-mammal populations, the MMPA established a moratorium on the "taking" (defined as harassing, hunting, capturing, or killing) and importation of marine mammals. However, procedures for granting exemptions and permits were provided for scientific research and public display. Through the reauthorization process, The HSUS will work with Congress to preserve and strengthen the MMPA, especially regarding captive marine mammals.

Also due for reauthorization is the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ESA, first passed in 1973, has provided needed protections to many endangered and threatened species, such as the brown pelican and the gray whale, but the U.S. government has not complied with some ESA reg-



Speaker of the House Thomas Foley administers the oath of the House to new members of Congress in January.

ulations. It has failed to develop recovery plans for almost half of all listed species, for example. (In a recent settlement of a lawsuit filed by the Fund for Animals and others, the Department of the Interior agreed to accelerate the listing process for threatened and endangered species under the ESA.)

Increased funding is essential for full implementation of the ESA. Reauthorization is likely to be extremely controversial, as environmental and economic considerations are debated. Rep. Gerry Studds is expected to introduce reauthorization legislation similar to a bill he sponsored in the previous Congress (H.R. 4045). We expect to support his approach, which would strongly promote the species-recovery aspects of the ESA. We will continue to work with the Endangered Species Coalition, a broadly based group of animal-protection and environmental organizations dedicated to preserving and strengthening the ESA.

The HSUS is focusing on obtaining appropriations for several ongoing federal pro-

grams. We will ask Congress for increased funds for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the areas of research into non-lethal methods of animal-damage control, enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act, and continued development of plans to implement the Organic Foods Production Act.

The HSUS will also seek additional funds for the National Institutes of Health's National Toxicology Program, which is directed to explore alternatives to the use of animals in research.

The HSUS recently spoke with Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada regarding appropriations for the wild-horse immunization program (see the article on page 5). We plan to testify before Congress on this issue and are optimistic about obtaining enough funds for full implementation of the program.

Congress will consider important new and reintroduced legislation in the coming months. The HSUS was pleased that on January 25 Rep. Gary Ackerman of New York reintroduced his legislation prohibiting the sale of

"downed" animals at livestock markets (H.R. 559); Sen. Daniel Akaka of Hawaii expected to reintroduce the Senate version of the bill in February. ("Downers" are animals too sick, weak, or crippled to walk unassisted.) The HSUS testified before Congress about downers last year, and we will continue to press for passage of the legislation this year.

We expect that Rep. Ben Cardin of Maryland will reintroduce the Puppy Protection Act, a proposed "lemon law" that would allow consumers to recover veterinary costs if they purchase a sick animal from a pet shop.

We are also supporting resolutions in Congress calling on the United States to continue opposing the resumption of commercial whaling. At last year's meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), Norway announced that it intends to recommence commercial whaling, violating the international moratorium established by the IWC in 1986. The HSUS is concerned that some countries will press the IWC to overturn the moratorium at this year's meeting, to be held in Japan in May. The resolution states that "the United States should make the fullest use of diplomatic channels [and] appropriate domestic and international law" to advocate the conservation of whale species. It also calls upon the United States to work toward a moratorium on the direct commercial harvest of dolphins and porpoises.

HSUS/HSI has launched a boycott of Norwegian fish, cheese, and petroleum products; we ask our members to use their buying power to help keep Norway out of the whaling business. ■