

STATE SENATOR • GILDA Z. JACOBS • 14TH DISTRICT

Jacobs Press Release

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SENATORS JACOBS AND CASSIS PRAISE SENATE PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION TO SAVE DETROIT ZOO

Bills to allow county zoo authorities have bipartisan backing

LANSING – Sponsor Senator Gilda Z. Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) and co-sponsor Sen. Nancy Cassis (R-Novi) praised Senate passage of legislation that would allow Michigan counties to form Zoo Authorities. Under the bill, an Authority would have the power to levy a millage, subject to approval by taxpayers, for the purpose of supporting accredited Michigan zoos. The millage rate would be capped at one-tenth of one mil (0.1), resulting in approximately \$5 per year for each \$100,000 of a home's taxable value.

While the legislation applies to all Michigan countries, the Detroit Zoo would be the primary beneficiary. Without such legislation, the Detroit Zoo would be unable to cover its operating and capital liabilities and expenses under its current funding model.

"I have spent 27 years representing the Detroit Zoo, recognizing the value that it provides to the region as well as the state," Sen. Jacobs said. "This legislation will allow the Zoo to remain affordable and accessible and to continue offering educational and entertainment opportunities for Michigan families. With this legislation, we'll be able to provide a dedicated revenue stream to the Zoo to ensure our children and grandchildren will have the opportunity to enjoy the Zoo for years to come."

The Detroit Zoo is one of the country's finest accredited zoos and ranks among Michigan's most popular and visited tourist attractions, boasting more than 1.1 million visitors annually, 85% of those coming from the tri-county area. In 2006, the City of Detroit discontinued its operating subsidy and transferred operations to the Detroit Zoological Society (DZS), a private non-profit charitable corporation. Since then, significant cost savings have been achieved.

"A critical component of this legislation is the requirement that the millage be approved by a vote of county residents," said Sen. Cassis. "By putting the question of a millage increase to a vote of the people, we provide taxpayers with the ability to approve or disapprove of the proposal."

The legislation now moves to the House for approval.

Two separate 2007 Zogby polls indicated that 78 percent of those surveyed supported levying of a zoo assessment on taxable property.

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