

What is the AETA?



In November 2006, Congress passed the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA), a law that amends the Animal Enterprise Protection Act (AEPA) by increasing the penalties for activities that disrupt the business of companies that exploit and abuse animals and by broadening the

scope of businesses that the law protects. The AETA was rushed through Congress under suspension of rules, meaning that there was no extensive debate about it and many Senators and Representatives were not even present to vote on it. The sponsors of the AETA say its purpose is to crack down on violent animal and environmental rights extremists, even though there has not been a single injury or death caused by anyone involved in an animal or environmental action. Instead, the bill criminalizes constitutionally-protected activity and chills free speech by exploiting the public's fear of terrorism.

What does the AETA do?

- ◆ It violates constitutionally protected First Amendment rights by deterring protests, leafleting, boycotts, and joining an animal rights organization. While the AETA does not directly prohibit these activities, its vague, broad language scares people from participating in these activities for fear of being called "terrorists."
- ◆ It exploits the public's fear of terrorism that surfaced in the wake of 9/11 by utilizing rhetoric that demonizes animal rights activists despite the fact that they have never injured or taken a human life and, instead, consistently advocate for respect of living beings.
- ◆ It is unnecessary, because it prohibits activities that are already existing crimes, such as burglary and trespassing. Further, the AEPA already provided further protection to animal exploitation industries and was only used twice since its passage in 1992.
- ◆ The AETA punishes people for their ideology not their actions, because it gives harsher penalties than the federal sentencing guidelines for the same crimes.
- ◆ It deters the investigation of animal enterprises which may be violating existing laws, because it does not require that an animal enterprise be legal in order to receive the AETA's protections.

- ◆ It detracts government resources from investigations and prosecutions of real threats, such as suicide bombers, anti-abortionists who have killed 7 people since 1977, white supremacists who killed 5 people in 2003 alone, etc.
- ◆ It favors corporate interest over your First Amendment rights.
- ◆ It opens the door for similar laws that could target other legitimate environmental and social justice movements. Silencing dissent in this way violates the rights of all citizens.

"My concern about this bill is that it does nothing to address the real issue of animal protection, but instead targets those advocating animal rights. This legislation will have a real and chilling effect on people's constitutionally protected First Amendment rights." —Dennis Kucinich

How is AETA different than AEPA?

The AETA amended the 1992 Animal Enterprise Protection Act (AEPA). Corporate interests and elected officials believed that the AEPA had been ineffective and needed to be strengthened. Here's how they amended it:

the AEPA said:	the AETA says:	the IMPACT of the change:
You must have the "purpose of causing physical disruption to the functioning of an animal enterprise" which "intentionally damages or causes the loss of any property (including animals or records) used by the animal enterprise, or conspires to do so."	You must have "the purpose of damaging or interfering with the operations of an animal enterprise" "in connections with such purpose—" which" (A) intentionally damages or causes the loss of any real or personal property (including animals or records) used by an animal enterprise, or any real or personal property of a person or entity having a connection to, relationship with, or transactions with an animal enterprise; (B) intentionally places a person in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury to that person, a member of the immediate family (as defined in section 115) of that person, or a spouse or intimate partner of that person by a course of conduct involving threats, acts of vandalism, property damage, criminal trespass, harassment, or intimidation; (C) conspires or attempts to do so."	AETA protects "tertiary targets": Supporters of the bill said this was a loophole that needed to be closed in the AEPA and often mention the SHAC7 as reason to do so; however, the SHAC7 were prosecuted for running a website under the AEPA, so the loophole doesn't really need to be closed. Instead, this limits the types of campaign strategies activist groups can use. Anti-apartheid activists used "tertiary targeting" in their divestment campaigns; under this law "tertiary targeting" is now "terrorism." AETA includes "reasonable fear," which is so vague it could define any activism: Its impossible to define "reasonable fear," especially when industry groups are using their resources to make the public afraid of non-violent activists. Industry groups have taken out full-page ads in newspapers and called major children's motion pictures, "soft core eco-terrorism for kids." This language could be used to incriminate or prosecute virtually every activist, then, including those engaging in constitutionally-protected activities.
Individuals who cause less than \$10,000 in economic damage could be imprisoned for up to 6 months, and someone who causes more than \$10,000 in economic damage could be imprisoned up to 3 years.	"a fine under this title or imprisonment not more than 1 year, or both, if the offense does not instill in another the reasonable fear of serious bodily injury or death and— (A) the offense results in no economic damage or bodily injury; or (B) the offense results in economic damage that does not exceed \$10,000." The penalties increase in fines and prison time based on how much economic damage was done to the animal enterprise.	AETA doesn't stop "violence" it only protects corporate profits: Increases in imprisonment and fines are centered around how much economic damage was done; this bill, then, is not about stopping "violence" because violence hasn't taken place. It's about classifying "non-violent physical obstruction," crimes that do not "instill in another the reasonable fear of serious bodily injury," and property crimes as "terrorism," in order to recoup corporate losses and demonize and silence dissent.

What can I do?

1. Share this information with others. Contact us for more copies to distribute at your workplace, school or community.
2. Organize an event in your community and make a presentation about the AETA.
3. Continue working for animal rights and furthering the movement. Don't let the corporations win! There are lawyers out there to support you if the FBI comes knocking on your door.
4. Write a letter to your local newspaper about the AETA and why you think it should be repealed.
5. Contact your Senator and Representative and let them know how you feel about the AETA. Call, write or email them. Organize a group of people in your community to call and write your elected officials. Demand a meeting with your elected officials to sit down and discuss the AETA and what they should do to protect your constitutional rights. Contact us for more materials to help with organizing a letter writing campaign, petitioning and to prepare yourself for a meeting with your elected officials.
6. Join the Coalition to Abolish the AETA. We are a national network of grassroots activists, concerned citizens and lawyers working together to raise awareness about the AETA in our communities, build public pressure and mobilize people locally and nationally to abolish the AETA. We need your help to succeed! For more information check out www.abolishaeta.org or contact us at abolishtheaeta@gmail.com.



What corporate money supported the AETA?

- American Academy of Sleep Medicine
- American Assoc. of Laboratory Animal Science
- American Brian Coalition
- American Physiological Society
- American Psychological Assoc.
- American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics
- American Society of Laboratory Animal Practitioners
- Americans for Medical Progress
- Animal Agriculture Alliance
- Assoc. for Assessment & Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International
- Assoc. for Psychological Science
- Assoc. of American Medical Colleges
- Assoc. of American Universities
- Assoc. of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
- Biotechnology Industry Organization
- Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals & Vetmedicine, Inc.
- California Biomedical Research Assoc.
- California Healthcare Institute
- Cedars-Sinai Health System
- Covance
- Discovery Institute
- F2 Chemicals Ltd.
- Farm Animal Welfare Coalition
- Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
- Fur Information Council of America
- GlaxoSmithKline
- Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts
- Huntington Life Sciences
- Massachusetts Society for Medical Research
- Michigan Society for Medical Research
- Mid-Continent Assoc. for Agriculture, Biomedical Research & Education
- National Animal Interest Alliance
- National Assoc. for Biomedical Research
- Wisconsin Association for Biomedical Research & Education

Join us! Abolish the AETA

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celebrating 40 years on the front lines for social justice

protect your right to dissent
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