The American Federation of Aviculture will soon retain the services of a Washington law firm to represent avicultural interests in the nation’s capitol.

The ever-growing threat of new legislation and governmental regulations restricting the freedom of aviculturists to pursue their hobby has demonstrated the need for a professional approach. It is the opinion of A.F.A.’s board of directors that only an attorney can effectively communicate to lawmakers the negative effects of such legislation that will effectively put an end to aviculture, while bringing the nation’s zoos to their knees.

H.R. 6631 establishes a Federal Zoological Control Board empowered to license all zoos, pet shops, and private individuals who possess one or more non-agricultural animals, excluding dogs and cats. Definitions of persons, animals, and activities covered are so thorough as to include the home tropical fish aquarium and two canaries in a cage. The following partial list of definitions are taken from SEC. 3.

- "captive", means any animal that is not open to the general public.
- "zoological animal" means any person who captures or imports any zoological animal for sale, or who purchases any zoological animal from any other zoological dealer or from any zoo for resale, or who transports any zoological animal in interstate or foreign commerce for a fee.
- "Board" means any person who maintains a zoological hobby.
- "zoological hobbyist” means any person who maintains a zoological hobby.

Each “zoological hobbyist” (aviculturist/breeder) will be required to apply for a federal license to legally continue to keep birds. License numbers may be required by dealers before they can legally sell seed and other supplies to breeders, as well as purchase young birds from them.

Licensing standards for aviculturists “...shall include such requirements with respect to formal education, experience, and demonstration of competence by examination as the Board deems appropriate, including examinations of sufficient difficulty to demonstrate—

- (A) knowledge of the captive care of specified categories of zoological animals, such as terrestrial mammals, marine mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, terrestrial invertebrates, fresh water fishes and invertebrates, and marine fishes and invertebrates;
- (B) in the case of zoological Park curators, professional competence in the overall administration of zoological parks; and
- (C) in the case of zoological dealers, professional competence in providing proper care and maintenance of zoological animals in the transportation of such animals.

A novel approach to the enforcement of H.R. 6631 is detailed in Part 5, which allows for class action suits. These suits may be initiated by “any person” who feels that a “zoological hobbyist” is not in possession of a license or is otherwise in violation of the law.

Should the Dingell bill become law, breeders will be given one year to comply. Failure to do so will result in confiscation of all birds, which will then be destroyed by euthanasia. Non-compliance may also result in a fine and imprisonment.

H.R. 6631 appears to be a consolidation of a number of recent federal proposals, each of which would have severely crippled aviculture. Breeders must stand up and be heard. Little imagination is necessary to realize they cannot hide their hobby very long, if they can no longer purchase bird seed and other supplies.