

## Farm Bill Veto is Overridden

**Amendments could have dramatically impacted the reptile trade.**

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In recent years the Farm Bill has become a vehicle for seeking to move pet trade legislation, as opposed to promoting such initiatives in stand-alone legislative bills. The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) was closely involved in provisions of this year's Farm Bill (the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008) with potential to impact the pet trade. Among the amendments that had been on the table was language that would have dramatically impacted the reptile trade and Animal Welfare Act (AWA) provisions barring puppy imports.

Although President Bush's opposition to the final version of the Farm Bill resulted in an executive veto, veto-proof majorities with which the bill passed in both houses of Congress held up, and the House of Representatives overrode the president's veto, while the Senate rejected the veto.

Because legislation this size is routinely amended with myriad provisions, PIJAC closely tracked the bill throughout the legislative process. As originally adopted by the House, the Farm Bill was free of onerous provisions impacting the pet trade. Amendments on the Senate side, however, threatened two segments of the industry: reptiles and puppies.

The Senate amendment mandating a determination as to the "prevalence of salmonella in each species of reptile and amphibian sold legally as a pet in the United States" was intended to counter the longstanding prohibition against the sale of turtles under 4 inches in the United States. Because of the manner in which this provision was crafted, it would have created a ban against other reptile species without doing anything to further the legalization of pet turtles. As a result, PIJAC opposed the amendment when the Farm Bill went to conference committee. Had the measure passed in the final version of the Farm Bill, the Food and Drug Administration may have been required by law to ban the sale of virtually every pet reptile species in the country. PIJAC was successful in having this amendment stricken from the conference report, and it was not part of the final version of the bill passed by Congress.