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**In Defense of Animals Blasts USDA for Forcing Elephant Move to
Controversial Zoo**
**Unprecedented deal sends Queenie to San Antonio Zoo, denying her retirement to a
natural-habitat sanctuary**

San Rafael, Calif. – In Defense of Animals (IDA) sent a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack today, blasting the agency for a settlement agreement that will send a 53-year-old Asian elephant named Queenie to a grossly inadequate exhibit at the San Antonio Zoo. The transfer is a condition for settlement of federal animal welfare charges against her handler, Will Davenport. IDA supports sending Queenie to the spacious PAWS Sanctuary, which months ago made a [formal offer](#) to provide a home for her.

“IDA supports removing Queenie from her negligent circus handler, but vehemently opposes sending her to the San Antonio Zoo as its exhibit is unfit even for the one elephant it presently holds,” said Catherine Doyle, IDA elephant campaign director.

“If the USDA were acting in Queenie’s best interest it would let her retire to the PAWS Sanctuary where she would have the best possible quality of life, including a 50-acre habitat to roam, high quality care, and the peace and quiet she deserves after a lifetime in the circus.”

In the letter to Vilsack IDA criticized the USDA’s choice of the San Antonio Zoo, which has been at the center of controversy over its solitary Asian elephant, Lucky, who lives in an antiquated, less than half-acre display. IDA cited welfare concerns and the fact that the zoo’s future plans do not include Asian elephants, meaning Lucky and any other Asian elephants will be moved out. The zoo has twice topped IDA’s annual list of the Ten Worst Zoos for Elephants.

“The USDA’s action does not help Lucky or Queenie,” said Doyle. “Cramming two elephants into the zoo’s tiny display will just make things worse.”

IDA has been working for three years to rescue Queenie because of abuse and negligent treatment. The USDA seized two other elephants, Tina and Jewel, from Davenport in August 2009 due to their seriously deteriorating health; both were sent to the San Diego Zoo for specialized medical care. The USDA agreement sets aside \$85,000 out of \$100,000 in fines in exchange for Queenie’s transfer to the San Antonio Zoo, in settlement for multiple violations of the Animal Welfare Act involving all three elephants.

[Read IDA's letter to the USDA here.](#) For more information, visit www.HelpElephants.com.

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