



Fish and Game dashes California ferret fans' hopes

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The California Fish and Game Commission unanimously rejected a petition Wednesday to issue permits for neutered and vaccinated pet ferrets in a blow to illegal owners of the weasel-like creatures.

California is one of two states that outlaws domesticated ferrets, despite a three-decade-long push by advocates to reverse a ban that dates back to 1933.

Ferret activist Pat Wright filed a petition asking the commission to go around existing law and issue permits under special circumstances for neutered or spayed ferrets as an exemption to the ban. Wright argued that ferrets are already in California in large numbers and permits would allow their owners to “come out of the closet.”

“There is no balance on the ferret issue,” Wright said at the meeting. “I don’t think you’re treating us fairly.”

Advocates at the commission meeting in Van Nuys argued that ferrets are domesticated pets that do not pose a threat to humans or other animals. Several speakers questioned why ferrets have been singled out in California.

Assemblyman Todd Gloria, D-San Diego, sent a letter in support of the petition and similarly suggested permits would allow ferret owners to “legally and openly enjoy their pets.”

The commission voted in accordance with a staff recommendation to deny the petition.

Fish and Game Commission President Eric Sklar advised ferret advocates to push a bill through the state Legislature to legalize pet ferrets instead of asking the commission to work around the law.

Back in 2004, former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill to legalize ferrets and said he was concerned that a study had not been conducted to show the health, safety and environmental impacts of the animal in California.

“I love ferrets,” Schwarzenegger wrote in his veto message. “I co-starred with a ferret in ‘Kindergarten Cop.’”