

By Representative Casey

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Florida panther research
3 and management program; providing an
4 appropriation from the Florida Panther Research
5 and Management Trust Fund for specified
6 purposes; providing an effective date.
7

8 WHEREAS, the State of Florida, through its panther
9 research and management program, originally purchased nine
10 Texas cougars for purposes relating to testing the suitability
11 of certain habitats for large cats and crossbreeding with the
12 Florida panther to provide the Florida cat with the requisite
13 genetic variability to ensure its future health, and

14 WHEREAS, the cougars remaining after the habitat
15 testing and crossbreeding studies ended were subsequently sold
16 and ultimately returned to Texas where reports have indicated
17 that they may have been used for private hunts, and

18 WHEREAS, upon receiving such reports, Sarasota in
19 Defense of Animals, a not-for-profit organization, urged the
20 Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission to expend public
21 funds set aside for the Florida panther research and
22 management program to repurchase the three remaining cougars,
23 and

24 WHEREAS, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish
25 Commission did not have the statutory authority to expend such
26 funds, and

27 WHEREAS, Sarasota in Defense of Animals subsequently
28 secured private funds and purchased the cougars on its own to
29 ensure their safety, and

30 WHEREAS, Sarasota in Defense of Animals believes that
31 the responsibility for caring for these cougars rests with the

1 State of Florida because these animals were originally
2 captured and sold to the state as a part of its panther
3 research and management program, and

4 WHEREAS, it is therefore fitting that Sarasota in
5 Defense of Animals be reimbursed for the costs it has incurred
6 in repurchasing these remaining cougars and that the State of
7 Florida accept its responsibility for these animals and
8 provide funding sufficient to ensure their care and protection
9 for the rest of their natural lives, NOW, THEREFORE,

10
11 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

12
13 Section 1. Notwithstanding any provision of ss.
14 320.08058(5) and 372.672, Florida Statutes, to the contrary,
15 there is hereby appropriated from the Florida Panther Research
16 and Management Trust Fund to Sarasota in Defense of Animals, a
17 not-for-profit organization, the sum of \$50,000 for the
18 following purposes:

19 (1) Reimbursing the organization for expenses in
20 recovering the remaining Texas cougars originally purchased as
21 part of the Florida panther research and management program;

22 (2) Constructing a holding facility for these cougars;
23 and

24 (3) Providing for the maintenance of these cougars for
25 the remainder of their natural lives.

26 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 1997.
27
28
29
30
31

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31

HOUSE SUMMARY

Provides an appropriation from the Florida Panther Research and Management Trust Fund to Sarasota in Defense of Animals, a not-for-profit organization, to cover the costs of caring for the remaining Texas cougars originally purchased as part of the Florida panther research and management program.