

What Happened to Carolyn Maloney's Pandas?

From [Donny Moss, TheirTurn.net](#)

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Carolyn Maloney's panda quest could end with Democratic primary loss

By Zach Williams

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Rep. Carolyn Maloney's panda-monium could be coming to an end.

Carolyn Maloney, a U.S. Congresswoman who spent several years attempting to lease a pair of giant pandas from China and put them on display in New York City, has been voted out of office. Maloney lost the Democratic primary to fellow incumbent Congressman Jerry Nadler, who signed Voters for Animal Rights "No to Pandas in Captivity" [pledge](#).

In 2016, Maloney partnered with two prominent billionaires, John Catsimatidis and Hank Greenberg, to create a not-for-profit organization "to raise funds to bring panda bears to New York City." Money raised by The Pandas are Coming to NYC, Inc. would be used to lease two giant pandas from a breeding facility in China; to build a "pavilion" in Central Park in which to display them; and to pay for their care. Maloney's motives for embarking on this expensive and complicated undertaking are unclear, though she and her partners on the project claim that the presence of pandas would bring joy to New Yorkers and tourists.

From the outset, the plan had one influential detractor, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which runs the Central Park Zoo. For Maloney, the zoo was the most obvious place to put the pandas on display, but the WCS didn't want the pandas because they are expensive and require more care than most other wild animals in zoos. WCS's opposition did not deter Maloney, at least at first. She and her partners said they would build a stand-alone "panda pavilion" in the park.

The New York Times

Congresswoman's Long Quest: Bringing Pandas to New York



By **Alexander Burns**

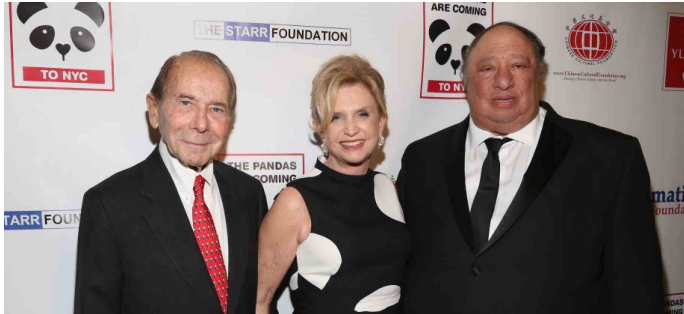
Feb. 4, 2016

It is an obsession that has taken her to the other side of the world, one that has turned casual conversations into arm-twisting negotiations, and innocuous radio chitchat into a stealth attack on the mayor of New York.

This is the story of [Representative Carolyn B. Maloney](#) and her unusual ursine quest: to bring a pair of pandas to the city.



In 2017, Maloney, Catsimatidis and Greenberg, hosted a fundraising gala at the Waldorf Astoria to raise money to lease and display the pandas. The gala raised approximately \$125,000 for The Pandas are Coming to NYC Inc., a fraction of the tens of millions of dollars needed for the project. Still, positive media coverage of the “Black & White Panda Ball” generated widespread public awareness and gave the project momentum.



Within weeks of the Panda Ball, the NYC-based animal rights group TheirTurn launched a [campaign](#) to discourage Maloney and her partners from moving forward with this project. After sending them letters and launching a social media campaign, activists began staging provocative protests at their public events with the message that pandas, like all wild animals, exist for their own purposes; that they belong in their natural habitat, and that they should not be held captive in an exhibit for our amusement.

During an [encounter](#) with protesters in Midtown Manhattan, John Catsimatidis invited TheirTurn’s Donny Moss onto his [radio show](#) to discuss the concerns of the animal rights community. During the interview, he argued that “90% of NYers want the pandas,” according to a poll he commissioned. He also revealed that he found a donor who is “contributing \$10 million to build a panda pavilion.”

care2 PETITIONS
NEW YORK CITY, NY



No Panda Prison in NYC

by: [Donny Moss](#)

recipient: U.S. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, [New York City, NY](#)

10,491 SUPPORTERS IN NEW YORK CITY

98,282 SUPPORTERS

100,000 GOAL

U.S. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney must call off her plans to import two giant pandas from China into NYC.

After the radio interview failed to sway Catsimatidis, TheirTurn organized a protest at the Fifth Avenue home of Hank Greenberg. Several hours before the protest, Greenberg called Moss and asked him to cancel it. Like Catsimatidis, Greenberg defended the panda plan, scoffed at Moss's objections and gave no indication that he and his colleagues would back down. That evening, dozens of activists staged the [protest](#) at his building.

In a subsequent letter to the plans' backers, Moss suggested that they create a virtual reality exhibit in which visitors could observe and experience pandas in their natural habitat. In response, an executive who was working on the project wrote, "Not in a million years would these guys buy this." Several months later and in response to the protests, the same individual wrote, "Actually I think you have done well. It seems stalled and without constant momentum, these things die." In the years that followed the Black and White Panda Ball, the panda project did, in fact, appear to fizzle. Maloney stopped fundraising, and the not-for-profit became inactive, according to its tax forms.

The local animal rights community does not know what impact the protests played in Maloney's apparent decision to stop pursuing the pandas, but they are pleased. "We encourage Congresswoman Maloney, John Catsimatidis and Hank Greenberg to donate the money they raised and no longer need for the panda pavilion to organizations that conserve wild animals in their natural habitat," said Allie Taylor, president of Voters for Animal Rights, which opposed Maloney's plan to import the pandas.