

Hello. My name is Michele Smith, and I am a member of the American Miniature Schnauzer Club. I am the Rescue Chair for that Club, as well as for the Chicago Miniature Schnauzer Club. For over a decade now, every year, I take in and rehome approximately 75-80 miniature schnauzers. I have been asked to speak about why it is important for everyone who loves their pet to get involved in fighting anti-pet legislation.

Is it a fair assumption on my part, that you are members of this club because you love your dog(s)? You love them because of who they are, and what they are, and how much joy they bring to your life, and you wanted to know more about the breed, to be the best owner you could be to your dog? I know that is the reason I joined my breed club.

Now, imagine if you will, what your life would have been like WITHOUT your dog(s). For me, I know I would have missed out on a lot of unconditional love, fun, companionship, and in the end, a wonderful mission. Well, if more people don't help fight the anti-pet legislation that our state, and many other states are currently facing, you won't have to imagine it, you and your loved ones will eventually be forced to live a life without pets.

Are you aware that for the last several years, our right to own pets has been under attack by groups that claim to want to protect animals? Their real goal, which they admit, is to protect them right out of our homes and our lives. They believe that animals should run free and shouldn't be kept as pets, and they believe they have the right to make YOU live according to THEIR beliefs.

Here are a couple quotes, from some of the leaders of the Animal Rights groups, just so you don't think I have lost my mind.

The first 2 comments were made by Ingrid Newkirk, head of PETA.

"Pet ownership is an absolutely abysmal situation brought about by human manipulation." **Ingrid Newkirk, national director, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA), Just Like Us? Harper's, August 1988, p. 50.**

"[A]s the surplus of cats and dogs {artificially engineered by centuries of forced breeding} declined, eventually companion animals would be phased out, and we would return to a more symbiotic relationship--enjoyment at a distance." **Ingrid Newkirk, "Just Like Us? Toward a Notion of Animal Rights", Harper's, August 1988, p. 50.**

The next 4 comments were made by Wayne Pacelle, head of the Humane Society of the United States, which is also known as PETA in suits.

"Animals for the most part just need to be left alone." **Wayne Pacelle, Los Angeles Times, July 19, 2008**

"I don't have a hands-on fondness for animals...To this day I don't feel bonded to any non-human animal. I like them and I pet them and I'm kind to them, but there's no special bond between me and other animals." **Wayne Pacelle quoted in Bloodties: Nature, Culture and the Hunt by Ted Kerasote, 1993, p. 251.**

"We have no ethical obligation to preserve the different breeds of livestock produced through selective breeding. . One generation and out. We have no problem with the extinction of domestic animals. They

are creations of human selective breeding." **Wayne Pacelle, Senior VP of Humane Society of the US, formerly of Friends of Animals and Fund for Animals, Animal People, May, 1993**

When asked if he envisioned a future without pets, "If I had my personal view, perhaps that might take hold. In fact, I don't want to see another dog or cat born." **Wayne Pacelle quoted in Bloodties: Nature, Culture and the Hunt by Ted Kerasote, 1993, p. 266.**

"It is time we demand an end to the misguided and abusive concept of animal ownership. The first step on this long, but just, road would be ending the concept of pet ownership." **Elliot Katz, President "In Defense of Animals," Spring 1997**

So, these fanatics go about trying to get laws passed that dictate how many pets you can keep in your home, what breed of dog you can own, where you can get that dog, and whether you can breed your dog(s) or keep it intact for health reasons. And, if they don't like your breed, they try to get laws passed that prohibit you from owning that breed. They want laws passed that EVERYONE MUST have their pets spayed or neutered by the time they are six months old. They want to make it extremely difficult and extremely expensive for the people who want to keep their pets intact, whether they intend to breed them, or just because they feel it is healthier for the dog. They want to make it literally impossible for rescuers to be able to rehome dogs out of their homes, by setting requirements that cannot be accommodated in a home setting, and these same requirements will apply to breeders like those in this club and other breed clubs.

Nine out of ten new laws relating to pets are actually anti-pet in purpose. However, since 'anti-pet' wouldn't sell to the average person, the real purpose is never made public. Pet laws must be studied to figure out what they will really do. The true purpose will be found by looking at what would ordinarily be considered the 'unintended consequences' and the true purpose is often the reverse of what we're told.

The 'law of unintended consequences' is familiar in lawmaking. For instance, unlimited welfare benefits seemed like a way to lift people out of poverty, but the long-term effect was to build a cycle of dependence in which successive generations grew up and choose to 'get a check' rather than building the skills needed for adult independence. Laws passed with only the best of intentions therefore, caused the numbers of the poor to grow, decade by decade.

The difference is that for animal rights laws, the unintended consequences ARE the plan.

Everything else is just brightly colored wrapping paper, intended to build support and get the law passed. This tactic has been so well polished that you will find respected and well intended community leaders backing even the worst anti-pet bills.

When animal rights laws are claimed to be needed to prevent tragedy – 'pit bull' bans, extremely punitive dangerous dog laws, even anti-tethering laws – you will often find the mother or other close relative of someone badly hurt or killed by a dog, used as a figurehead for the effort to pass the law.

These individuals are sincere and you cannot blame them for trying to prevent a repetition. The tactic is effective because it is hard to say "Mrs. Johnson, I'm very sorry about Tommy but you don't have a clue what you're talking about." But these poor people are twice victimized – the second time, by an animal rights movement that is using them to put a human face on an anti-human and inhumane campaign.

Many, if not most communities in Illinois have already set pet limits. Most people are responsible, and have a pretty good idea of how many pets they can handle. Proper care is not determined by the number of animals you have, it is determined by whether you have resources (time and money) and interest to care for the animals you have. There aren't any laws dictating how many children we can have, or cars or pairs of shoes we can own, so why should there be a law dictating how many animals we can own?

People who maintain ANY number of pets responsibly and humanely and do not present a nuisance to their neighbors, should not be prevented from keeping them because other pet owners might not be as responsible. Irresponsible pet owners, whether they own one or 10 pets should be the focus of animal control nuisance laws, not people who do things right but have a certain number of animals.

Last July, in Chicago, an ordinance was introduced that would require all puppies and kittens to be surgically sterilized by the time they are six months old. Let me ask you, do you want the government to tell you if and when it is appropriate to have ANY medical procedure performed on your dog or cat? If YOU need surgery, isn't the authority YOU consult YOUR doctor? Why should it be different for your pets? Are you aware that IF a dog is going to be surgically sterilized, it should be done when the dog is physically mature, has stopped growing, and that for MANY breeds, six months is just WAY too early for this surgical procedure, and can cause irreparable damage to their health? Only your veterinarian can help you make the right decision, not your government.

Can you tell me what happens when ALL pets are spayed and neutered? Here is where the unintended consequences, which really are the intended consequences of the people who wrote the bill, the Humane Society of the United States, comes in. If all the reproductive organs are removed from all dogs and cats, where are you going to get a pet from? Right now, you could go to a shelter or rescue, but if all pets are spayed or neutered, eventually, there will be no pets available. The proposed mandatory spay neuter ordinance would require anyone wanting to keep an intact dog to undergo a criminal background check. How many hobbies have you heard of where the participants have to undergo a criminal background check and pay for two licenses (one for the rabies tag, and another for the "privilege" of owning their dog that has not been spayed or neutered?) and have to submit to a home inspection, done at the convenience of the government? Producing well-bred dogs is already an expensive hobby, and most breeders do not breed to make money. But if this law passes, it will make it even more expensive, not to mention the invasion of privacy, to produce a well-bred dog. It will drive more and more of the good, hobby breeders to stop breeding, and that is exactly what the animal rights groups want. And, it will dry up the sources of well-bred dogs, and YOU won't have a choice of where to get YOUR dog.

Another telling feature of the ordinance is that the Humane Society of the United States, which, by the way, does not own or operate any shelters AT ALL, is calling the mandatory spay neuter ordinance the Pet Overpopulation and Safety Ordinance Information. The Humane Society of the United States is saying that Chicago has a pet overpopulation problem, and yet Chicago, along with many other major cities, is importing dogs from other areas because we do not have enough adoptable dogs and puppies. If there is an overpopulation problem, then why are we bringing in pets from other places? Also, the "Safety" part of this ordinance is supposed to help control gang activity. Can someone here tell me how neutering dogs will affect gang activity, and make Chicago "SAFER"? Do you really think that people who ignore the laws about murder are REALLY going to have any greater respect for a law governing their pets' reproductive organs? If passed, this ordinance will affect responsible citizens, making them criminals if they don't comply.

I do rescue and I love finding new homes for the dogs, but a rescue dog is not a good match for everyone. For instance, I assume you are aware of President Obama and his family's search for a dog that would be a good match for their family. President Obama said the family would get a rescue or

shelter dog, but one daughter has allergies that severely limited their choices. Add in the factor that the President himself didn't want a small dog, and that limited their choices even more. When they decided on a Portuguese Water Dog, a dog that was big enough to satisfy the President, but is also a dog that people with allergies can usually tolerate, and had other qualities that the family was looking for, they decided on a dog that does not show up in shelters very often. They also wanted a puppy, since it was their first dog. The animal rights people are castigating the First Family because they chose a puppy that was returned to its breeder, claiming it is not a rescue dog. And yet, they would have had a field day if that breeder hadn't been willing to take back a dog that they produced. The First Family got what they wanted, but part of what they wanted was determined by the needs of their child. Do you think they should have HAD to take a shelter or rescue dog? What the First Family did was not like wanting a blue sweater, but settling for a green one, because you cannot find what you are looking for. We are talking about living beings here, and I have found that people are very particular about their pets – which they should be. However, I have also found that if a pet doesn't live up to peoples' expectations, it can be a very disappointing experience for the owners and for the dog, with the dog usually suffering the consequences of losing its home.

By doing nothing to fight against these proposed ordinances and laws, you give up your right to get a pet at all. It happens incrementally, by allowing bills or ordinances to pass which forfeit your rights, such as to determine how many pets you can keep in your home. Now that that right has been surrendered in many suburbs of Chicago, an ordinance to make it mandatory that your pet be surgically sterilized by the time they are six months old has been introduced.

-This year, there have been multiple bills introduced in our state's capitol, Springfield, that would put an end to home breeding programs. These bills were promoted by the Humane Society of the United States, an organization that is pushing to get them passed as bills that would stop what they call puppy mills. However, there are already laws on the books which prohibit animal cruelty, they just are not being enforced, and that is where the problem lies.

To prevent animal rights fanatics from taking away your right to own pets, you *must* become active in your own community and state.

If you think someone else is taking care of it, think again.

No one person should be "taking care of it." You need to know *how* it is being taken care of. Even if that person is trustworthy, capable, and articulate, she can't do it alone. Legislators work for votes, and the animal rights people turn out in droves. They are not a majority, but they certainly appear to be when we sit back and say someone else is "taking care of it." And our presence in numbers at these hearings is vitally important, because our physical presence makes an impact.

If you think you just aren't the "political" type, think again.

Who is? Certainly not me. There is no classification of Legislative Expert Dog Fancier (or cat or rabbit or reptile or bird or...) None of us started out planning to get involved in fighting anti-owner legislation or knowing anything about it. We're breeders and rescuers and fanciers and pet owners just like you. Though victories in this war can be very rewarding and I've met some great people I now count as friends, the fight itself is not especially fun. I would rather be taking care of the rescue dogs, showing, planning a litter, or going for a walk with the dogs. But if we plan to have those options ten years from now, someone has to do this. And those of us already involved NEED your help. Don't worry about whether you know

enough to help. If you know how to write a letter or make a phone call, you know enough. We'll help you interpret the laws and figure out what's wrong with them...and what's right.

If you think it won't happen in your town/county/state, think again.

It already is happening. Just this year, in 35 states, seriously bad laws are being proposed.

In Denver it is already illegal to breed pets. No exceptions.

In Dallas, they're enforcing zoning laws against home businesses to prevent breeders from selling their puppies and kittens.

In Louisville, KY, and Albuquerque, NM, the worst pet laws in the nation have been passed. In a matter of months or years, there will be no home breeding in those cities. The governor of New Mexico is attempting to make the Albuquerque law a state law.

PETA or HSUS members don't have to be a visible presence in your town for this to happen.

Those organizations have websites, conferences, and literature teaching people how to get animal rights bills and laws passed.

All it takes is one burned out shelter worker who decides that all the problems of the world can be blamed on breeders.

Or one distraught mother who thinks that all **scotties** should be banned because her child was bitten.

Or one applicant for a rescue animal who is turned down and decides rescuers ought to be regulated and licensed.

It's not the big AR organizations who start these things. It's your neighbors who see a perceived or actual problem and decide that the solution is in regulation of everyone rather than in enforcement of current laws...which nearly always would solve the problem. Once the action starts, the national organizations may well offer help and support to the people pushing these laws, but the main impetus is from local people.

So yes, it can happen in your neighborhood!

If you think you don't know what to do, where to start, or even how to find out what's going on, think again.

That one's easy. Here's all the stuff you need to do. If you can't do it all, do what you can. Everything counts.

Join the national Pet-Law email list.

Find out what's going on where you live. Join the Illinois Pet Law list, attend city council meetings, get involved!

Write letters.

Make phone calls.

Inform other people. Your vet, your groomer, your puppy (or kitten or bunny or bird or reptile) buyers, your rescue adopters, your other email lists, your neighbors, *anyone* who might possibly have an interest in preserving the right to own pets.

Meet with government representatives.

And last but not least....vote.

Does anyone have any questions?