



NEW SAN FRANCISCO PET BAN PROPOSED

**** HEARING SET FOR JUNE 9TH ****

The Issue.

Last year the [San Francisco Commission of Animal Control and Welfare](#) devoted discussion during multiple meetings to a proposal to ban the sale of pets. Opponents turned out in large numbers to voice concerns about this initiative, and offered to work on the development of alternative approaches to addressing alleged problems with unwanted animals. Although the Commission had indicated an interest in pursuing a more rational proposal, a new pet ban is now on the agenda for its Thursday June 9, 2011 meeting. **PIJAC is urging that pet lovers again appear at this hearing to make clear to Commission members that opposition to the ban remains strong!**

The Impact.

When the Commission first visited a suggested ban, the proposal offered up by Commission member Philip Gerrie focused on a prohibition against selling dogs and cats. The suggested ban was subsequently expanded to include a host of other pet animals as well, ostensibly for the purpose of stopping “the sale of dogs and cats from puppy mills, as well as decreas[ing] euthanasia rates of other small animals in city shelters.” PIJAC testified against the ban, and noted that limiting the availability of pets to the public will not solve the shelter issue but that, in fact, that issue had already been addressed with a commitment by pet retailers to re-home adoptable animals from shelters.

While the Commission subsequently entertained alternative proposals that would specifically target the concerns Commission members had raised, the Commission ultimately declined to pursue these options. Commissioner Gerrie noted at one meeting that he did not believe “we should rush this” and that his objective was “to do this right.” However, the Commission’s view of “doing this right” appears to still involve a restriction on the ability of San Franciscans to buy or sale pet animals at pet stores, rather than focus on a proactive effort to resolve the problem of shelter animals.

The new proposal up for discussion at the June 9th meeting targets “dogs, cats, birds, small animals (including but not limited to hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, guinea pigs, and chinchillas), reptiles, amphibians, and aquarium fish” and the ordinance would provide that in San Francisco people could acquire pets “of all species” only through pet store adoptions, direct retail sale by small breeders, or adoption from shelters or animal rescue organizations. All other pet sales, including by pet stores, would be completely prohibited.

This proposed ban on pet sales is justified by the Commission with the demonstrably false claims that “buying animals from local breeders and adopting from rescue/shelters are healthier companion animal choices” and that “the pet trade fuels an overpopulation problem.”

PIJAC Position.

PIJAC strongly supports the right to responsibly keep pets, and the right of pet owners to have options as to where they obtain their companion animals based on the pet owner's individual circumstances, needs and preferences. Pet stores provide healthy, responsibly raised pets to the public, and should serve as one of the options pet owners may turn to in choosing a companion animal. Imposing costly and overly-burdensome restrictions on pet ownership in order to discourage the keeping of pets does not eliminate shelter populations...Responsible re-homing of adoptable pets does.

Recommended Action.

This proposal is on the agenda for the Commission's Thursday, June 9, 2011 meeting, scheduled for 5:30 p.m. in City Hall Room 408, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102-4689.

All those who breed, sell, or own pets, as well as anybody who supports the right to have companion animals, should attend the Commission meeting and speak against this proposed ban on pets. As contact information for individual commission members is not made public, you should contact the Commission's office at (415) 554-6074 to voice your opposition to this ban. Pass the word to friends, family members and colleagues to do the same!

In speaking out on this proposal, you may wish to make the following points in your own words:

- The Commission's proposal is touted as addressing concerns about shelter populations, but retailers have already offered to re-home these animals and that offer continues to be rejected.
- Contrary to the claims of some advocates, research demonstrates that pet store puppies are as healthy, or healthier, than puppies from any other source.
- Banning the sale of pet store animals will not ensure pet owners adopt shelter animals. Those who choose pet store animals do so for many reasons, including the reality that the pet of their choice may not even be available for adoption.
- Dogs ending up in shelters rarely came from pet stores. Major studies consistently show that pet store dogs represent a very small percentage of the animals relinquished to shelters.
- Most pet stores obtain their puppies from responsible breeders, and customers choosing pet store puppies overwhelmingly end up with healthy and well-socialized pets.
- A ban targeting pet stores to protect animals is not rational. Pet stores are already more heavily regulated than any other source of pet animals in the state (and no state regulates pet stores more stringently than does California).
- Regulations on business should be based on a rational relationship between the restrictions and a goal serving the public interest. Limiting the ability of people to get pets is **NOT** in the public interest – it is **CONTRARY TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST!**

PIJAC will be posting revised *PetAlerts* on the [Breaking News page](#) of its website to advise members of any change in status and to recommend further action. You are encouraged to check the PIJAC website regularly for additional information.

Those having questions about this proposal should contact PIJAC's Michael Maddox via email at michael@pijac.org or by phone at 202-452-1525, ext. 106.