



LOCAL AND STATE  
ADVOCACY AND  
COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE



*Prepared  
exclusively for  
Pet Advocacy Network  
members*

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# INTRODUCTION

Every day, lawmakers and regulators make important decisions that can impact your livelihood, your customers and your ability to run your business. These policymakers need to have a credible and dependable source of information to assist them in making the right decisions for pets, pet businesses and pet owners.

The Pet Advocacy Network serves as the legislative and advocacy voice of the responsible pet trade, from the halls of Congress to state capitols and city halls throughout the country. We accomplish this by:

- Monitoring legislation and regulations regarding pets and pet ownership at the local, state, and national level;
- Providing testimony and comments to ensure legislation and regulations are in the best interest of pets and those who care for and about pets;
- Empowering members with the tools necessary to respond to legislative and regulatory issues; and
- Collaborating with and forging strong networks among government agencies, industry groups and non-governmental organizations.

As state legislatures across the country convene for legislative sessions and local councils continue their year-round meetings, it is a safe bet that at least a few of the items your elected officials take up could affect you and your business. Whether you are impacted positively or negatively, it is in your best interest to make your voice heard.

An important guiding principle for advocacy is to recognize that you need to make friends before you need friends. Do not be a stranger showing up at lawmakers' offices at the 11th hour. If you have built relationships with your lawmakers before an issue that threatens you arises, you have a much better chance of being successful. But how should you do it, and what should you say to be sure your views are counted?

This guide is designed to make state and local advocacy and communications practices easy to understand and implement so that you can be a part of our successful efforts to advocate on behalf of the pet industry. In the following pages, you will find tips on contacting, visiting, and writing public officials, as well as communications guidance on social media engagement, press releases, op-eds, and letters to the editor.

Thank you for all you do to support pets and the responsible pet care community.

Sincerely,

Mike Bober, President  
John Mack, Board Chair

# LOCAL AND STATE ADVOCACY GUIDE

## WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is an effort to influence the opinions and actions of elected officials. Your lawmakers are in office to represent you - their constituents. A key part of an elected official's job is listening to constituent concerns and taking them into consideration when making decisions.

As a constituent, you provide your elected officials with valuable resources: your knowledge and expertise, your connection to the community, and most significantly, your vote. Consequently, it is constituents who can have the most impact in educating and influencing elected representatives through advocacy efforts.

## WHY DOES LOCAL ADVOCACY MATTER?

Activist groups have turned to local governments to get their message across and further their agendas. Ordinances may be introduced when efforts to pass a state law are unsuccessful, in response to current local events, or where there is large grassroots support for a proposal.

Local laws require fewer resources to pass and can be voted on in a shorter amount of time than state or federal legislation. It is also easier to get access to local officials, through open meetings or during community events. Because of these factors, the number of local ordinances that impact the pet industry has been steadily increasing.

Monitoring and tracking local issues can be extremely difficult. The best way to stay informed is to attend local meetings and hearings, establish relationships with local government officials, be an active part of

your community, and monitor your local government meeting and hearing agendas. Local governments that pass ordinances include counties, cities, towns, townships, villages, etc.

## FORMING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS

There are a few simple things that you can do to build a relationship with your local lawmakers. We encourage you to use the methods that you are most comfortable with to engage elected officials. When an activist tries to garner support for anti-pet legislation, your local representatives should picture you and your business as the face of the pet care community.

- Be an active part of your community.
- Participate in and sponsor community events.
- Go to events that members of the local government attend and introduce yourself.
- Organize or participate in a "shop small" event with other businesses.
- Join your local Chamber of Commerce and/or other civic organizations.
- Invite local government officials to visit your business and meet your employees, to see firsthand the quality of your practices and understand that animal care and customer satisfaction are priorities.
- Regularly attend local government meetings, not just when an issue that affects you is being addressed. When appropriate, provide presentations or testimony on issues of concern. (See "Guidance for Providing Testimony" Section)
- Call local lawmakers' offices or send letters. (see Appendix for Phone Script and Sample Letter)

## WHAT IF YOU FIND AN ADVERSE LOCAL BILL?

Because there is no central system for tracking local ordinances nationwide, Pet Advocacy Network staff may not become aware of such legislation until an attentive member brings it to our attention. If you become aware of a pending bill or ordinance on a pet-related issue that Pet Advocacy Network has not addressed with a PetAlert, there are several steps you can take to make an impact.

1. Before you do anything, contact us at 202-452-1525 or [info@petadvocacy.org](mailto:info@petadvocacy.org) and let us know about it. You are more than just a voice for the pet care community, you are also our eyes and ears – especially at the local level.
2. Find out the status of the bill or ordinance by checking your city or county council's website or calling the city clerk's office.
  - Get a copy of the legislation and ask us to review and evaluate it.
  - Will there be a public hearing on the measure? Will there be an opportunity for public testimony or comments?
  - Will there be a vote? If so, when?
3. If possible, determine why the legislation was introduced. Was it the result of a specific incident? What outside groups are pushing this bill? Is there a problem the lawmaker is trying to solve?
4. After consulting with us, contact your elected officials and their staff to convey your support or opposition for the legislation. Often, just one call or email is not enough. Your efforts may require follow-up in the form of:
  - In-office visit.
  - Virtual visit/video call
  - Additional calls or emails to provide facts.
  - Finding like-minded allies to provide strength in numbers for your outreach.
  - Providing comments or testimony on the legislation. (See "Guidance for Providing Testimony" Section)

## WHY ADVOCATE AT THE STATE LEVEL?

State laws have a *tremendous* impact on animal protection. Hundreds of animal-related bills are enacted into law by state legislatures every year—far more than in the U.S. Congress. In recent years, retail pet sale bans, exotic pet restrictions, animal cruelty penalties, and more have been introduced in state legislatures across the country. State legislative processes are often faster than those at the federal level, making it very important to be engaged. This guide provides information on state legislative operations and resources, how bills progress through

state legislatures, how to work with legislators, effective advocacy strategies, and more to help companion animal advocates pursue pet-friendly state laws and stop bills that would harm animal welfare and impact the availability of pets.





## EFFECTIVE STATE ADVOCACY – DO YOUR HOMEWORK

To be an effective advocate, you must know where to find information. You should first familiarize yourself with your state’s legislative process and know the Senator and Representative/Assembly Member that represent you.

Most states have legislative information websites where you can research lawmakers, bill numbers, status, sponsors and co-sponsors, relevant committees, hearing dates, and other legislative details. If your state does not have such an office, you can get bill details from the legislature’s leadership or the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of State’s office, the Governor’s Office, or your state’s website.

### MONITORING AND TRACKING STATE LEGISLATION

It is vital to closely monitor bills that could impact your business. There is often little warning when activity on a piece of legislation is about to occur. To assist the pet care community in tracking legislation, Pet Advocacy Network’s website PetAdvocacy.org includes a State and Federal Issues Page that identifies and provides the most updated status of state legislation that could impact the industry if passed into law. Use this resource to stay current on bills that may affect the pet industry in your state or region.

One of the easiest and most effective ways to stay involved is to watch for Pet Advocacy Network’s PetAlerts. We actively monitor legislative activity at the federal and state levels. When legislation that is likely to have a significant impact starts to move, we send out a PetAlert describing the issue and encouraging members to weigh in with your lawmaker(s). Simply

click on one of the embedded links in the Alert, and you will be taken to a form with sample comment language. You will be able to personalize the message, enter your contact information, and send the message electronically to your elected officials, who can respond back to you directly using the contact information provided. You can view current Advocacy Campaigns here.

You should also follow your state’s legislative calendar to know when bills are likely to be considered. By knowing when your state’s legislature convenes, what days of the week legislation is considered in committee or by the full legislative body, and when the legislative session is scheduled to end, you can better plan meetings and strategize. During the closing days of a legislative session, action that would normally take weeks can occur in a matter of hours, and there are sometimes efforts to resurrect bills that were considered dead. Such efforts could include attaching the legislation as an amendment to other bills that have better prospects of passing. It is important to monitor legislation and stay in close contact with lawmakers, as well as allies who can provide “on the ground” intelligence or early warning on such scenarios before they occur.

### RESEARCHING YOUR LAWMAKERS

In addition to your state’s legislative information page, here are additional resources for looking up federal, state, and local lawmakers:

- Federal and State Lawmakers: [openstates.org](https://openstates.org) (see screenshot on next page)
- Federal, State, and Local Elected Officials lookup: [myreps.datamade.us](https://myreps.datamade.us)

Before communicating with or visiting your elected officials or their staff, you should to learn as much as possible about them. Check lawmakers' official websites and campaign websites for pertinent information, such as:

- **Committee assignments** – Are they on a committee with jurisdiction over business, pet, or animal care issues (such as the Small Business Committee or the Agriculture/Natural Resources Committee)?
- **Leadership roles** – Do they serve in a leadership role in their party or legislative body?
- **Election history** – Are they facing an election or primary opponent this year?
- **Personal history** – Do you have anything in common?
- **Issue interests** – Do they care deeply about small business or animal care issues? Are they a member of an animal or pet-related caucus? Have they previously championed pet-related legislation?


Example of [openstates.org](https://openstates.org) search:


## Find Your Legislators

Look your legislators up by address or use your current location.

Open States reflects districts for people currently in office for 2022. Legislators and district boundaries will be updated to reflect redistricting before the 2023 sessions.

State

NAME	PARTY	DISTRICT	CHAMBER
 Elizabeth B. Bennett-Parker	Democratic	45	lower



## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STATE LEGISLATORS

Connect with your elected official to get to know them better, educate them about pet industry issues, and explain the role of you or your business in the district or community. If your elected representatives already know you as a constituent or supporter, they are likely to be responsive to your requests than they would be if you only contact them when you need their help. The best time to get to know your legislators is back home in their district when they are less distracted by the business of the legislative session.

Building relationships with your lawmakers is important even if you did not vote for them or if they disagree with you on pet-related or other policy issues. If they do not seem to prioritize pet-related issues, it gives you more of a reason to reach out to educate them about our industry.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEGISLATORS AND THEIR STAFF INCLUDE:

- **Pay them a visit.** Introduce yourself and your business before there is a crisis.
- **Invite them to your facility for a site visit.** This gives them a first-hand understanding of the work you do and how it matters to your employees, customers, and community. Let them know that there are a lot of misperceptions about how the pet trade operates and invite them to get a firsthand look at reality. Offer to let them bring a subject matter expert such as the local government veterinarian or animal control director. Whether they take you up on having an expert attend or not, the invitation demonstrates that you are being transparent and helpful.
- **Help generate positive press.** When they visit your organization, you should work with their staff to develop and submit a press release with photos and/or social media posts. (See Communications Guide.)
- **Attend in-district events such as town hall meetings.** These meetings are a great way to bring your issues to their attention and speak with them personally.
- **Establish yourself as a helpful expert** that their staff can turn to when they have questions about pets/pet business issues. Provide useful information that informs and establishes you as a person they can turn to when they need to know more. Make yourself available to answer questions they might have.
- **Say thank you.** Legislators and their staff are constantly bombarded by requests and demands, often in less-than polite terms. Showing appreciation for their position or their vote on a particular issue means a lot to legislators and staff.
- **Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper** mentioning your legislator when he or she supports or otherwise advances your issues. (See Communications Guide below)
- **As a private citizen, volunteer with or contribute to a campaign.** Candidates have long memories for those who helped elect them into office. A small investment of time or money can pay huge dividends when threatening legislation arises. Campaigns always need volunteers, whether it be answering phones or handing out flyers. If you decide to contribute to a campaign, do not just mail in a check. Attend a fundraiser and introduce yourself. These cost very little at the local or state level and can ingratiate you with the candidate. Ask them for their positions and offer to meet with them later to educate them on the issues. Do not try to convince them at a fundraising function where they are focused on working the room.





## THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING WITH STAFF

To have maximum impact on your lawmaker, you will need to cultivate strong relationships with his or her staff. The staff of a Senator, Representative/Assembly Member, or City/County Council Member play an important role in the legislative process. Staff will often have issue-area expertise, and legislators rely on them for advice and guidance when it comes to taking positions on particular issues.

When reaching out to a lawmaker's office, it is often best to start with the staff member that handles that issue area. If you are unsure of who that is, call the lawmaker's office and ask. Sometimes the appropriate staffer will be a member of committee staff that handles the issue. Treat all staffers with the same respect. With office turnover and small staffs, the junior-level staffer answering phones today could be tomorrow's senior staffer, or a future elected official.

## ELEVATOR SPEECH

Sometimes discussions with lawmakers, staff, and advocates will take place spontaneously in informal conditions, such as walking down the hall, in an elevator, or even in line at the capitol cafeteria. It is important to be prepared for such opportunities by having an "elevator speech" prepared.

This is a short speech that you have memorized in case you get a brief moment with an elected official. Elevator speeches can help you recall your most important talking points and deliver them in a short amount of time. Ideally, an elevator speech should be about 30 seconds long, but try to keep it under one

minute, and be sure to practice beforehand.

**Here is what you should include in an elevator speech:**

- **Your name.**
- If you are a constituent, **identify where you live.**
- **Your title/workplace**, or some other connection to the community.
- **If you are a business owner**, where your business is located and how many people you employ.
- **The bill or issue you are advocating for/against**, and briefly how the issue affects you or the people around you.
- **Tell them briefly WHY** you and others are for/against the policy.
- **Thank the lawmaker or staffer** for listening to you.

It is helpful to bring a handout with pertinent information on it. If appropriate, you can give the document (along with your business card) to the elected official or their staff so they can read it and learn more later. If appropriate, ask for a business card so you can follow up with an email or phone call to request a more formal meeting if necessary.



## MEETING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Lawmakers want to know what is important to their constituents, so when your representative is available, take advantage of that time by scheduling an in-person meeting. Whether you meet with representatives in local district offices or in the state capitol, you can have a strong impact when meeting face-to-face.

Making an appointment is easy—simply call your legislator’s office and talk to the scheduler or the staff member handling the issue/bill number you would like to discuss.

### Things to Keep in Mind

- Legislators have busy schedules, so be flexible with the date and times you suggest. Meetings can be as short as 15 minutes.
- You may end up meeting with a staffer rather than a legislator. Do not let this discourage you - lawmakers rely heavily on staff to keep them informed and help them make decisions.
- Legislative offices have limited meeting space, so your meeting may be conducted in a noisy hallway or busy front office, with frequent disruptions. Try to make the most out of these meetings even if they are not held under ideal circumstances.

### Make the Most of Your Visit

- Dress professionally. Business attire is ideal, but business casual should be the minimum.
- Introduce yourself and briefly explain your position on the issue.
- Share relevant data/personal stories to illustrate the issue’s impact. Offer yourself as an expert resource.

- Listen to your legislator’s response and be prepared to answer questions. If you cannot answer his or her questions, take notes and get back to him or her promptly. If the legislator has been aligned with you on the issue previously, make sure you express thanks, while confirming you are still in agreement.
- Always be respectful and polite, even if you do not see eye to eye.
- Ask for business cards from staff so you can follow up appropriately.
- Remember to conclude by thanking your legislator and staff and reiterate your “ask.”

### Follow-Up and Next Steps

- Be sure to thank your legislator or staff in a brief note or email for taking the time to meet.
- Remind them of the stories you shared, your stance on the issues you discussed, and how their actions affect people in your community.
- If you were asked to provide any follow-up information, do so as soon as possible.
- Keep in mind that building relationships with legislative offices takes time. Regular engagement with these offices is important to maintain the connection. Remember that meeting just once is often not sufficient. You will likely need to circle back with updates or recent developments, or to check in with staff on the status of legislation.

## ESSENTIALS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING WITH YOUR LAWMAKER

- **Have a clear “ask” for the meeting—for instance, a site visit invitation, or asking for their support/opposition on a specific bill.**
- Before your meeting, research the status of the bill, the lawmaker’s stance and voting history on the issue, and the opposing viewpoints, so you can frame your talking points and messages.
- Limit the discussion to one or two issues so you can talk comprehensively in a short amount of time. Agree ahead of time on roles for each person attending the meeting. (Such as who should start the meeting, who should end it, and who will keep the conversation on track.)
- Bring a pen and paper to take notes during the meeting, recording the lawmaker’s position on the issue and any questions or information requests that arise.
- Take business cards, relevant fact sheets, and other important information to leave behind.
- Take photos with your legislator while you are visiting his or her office. Turn off your cell phone/silence your ringer before your visit.

## HOW AND WHEN TO 'PITCH' LEGISLATION

While many advocacy efforts are reactionary, there are times when you will want to proactively recommend legislation to elected officials. Staying informed on industry-related current events will enable you to find opportunities to propose, or “pitch” legislation.

If you think a piece of legislation needs to be introduced to help the industry, there is a good chance someone else had the same idea in another area of the country. Pet Advocacy Network can help in this effort by providing legislative language that has been written on the same issue or can advise you on writing new bill language if it has not been proposed before.

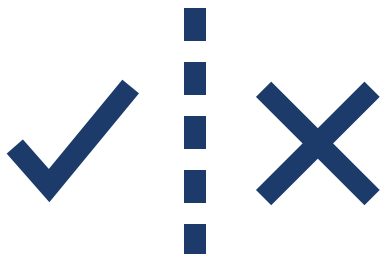
Cultivating and maintaining relationships with elected officials and their staff are a key part of pitching legislation. It bears repeating that you should not be reaching out to an office for the first time when you need something.



## LEGISLATIVE VISIT “DOS” AND “DON'TS”

### Do...

- **Make an appointment** to meet in your lawmaker's office if possible.
- **Dress professionally** and be confident. Practicing and personalizing your message ahead of time will help you be prepared.
- **Arrive early** enough to go through security to reach your lawmaker's office.
- **Treat all staff with respect.**
- When speaking with a legislator, **always introduce yourself**, even if you have previously met the lawmaker.
- **Identify the reason for your visit** – tell them you are there in support or opposition to specific legislation, and always identify bills by number. Explain how a bill will impact you or your community.
- **Be clear** about what you're asking the legislator to do – ask them whether they will support your position.
- **Be succinct** and allow time for the lawmaker or staff to ask questions.
- **Listen closely** to questions and provide honest, sincere answers. If you do not know an answer, tell the legislator you will research and get back to them ASAP.
- **Stick to the subject** at hand and your key talking points. Avoid going off on tangents or rants.
- **Bring business cards** and one-pagers or fact sheets to leave behind with the lawmaker and staff.
- **Thank legislators and staff** after visit, regardless of the outcome. Follow up via email or letter, providing information about the issue you discussed.



### Don't...

- **Don't bring sharp or dangerous objects** – you may have to go through security to get into the capitol or your lawmaker's office.
- Don't forget to **turn the ringer off** on your cell phone.
- **Don't address a legislator as "Mr. or Mrs."** Call them by their appropriate title (Representative/Assemblyman/Assemblywoman or Senator).
- **Don't be offended** if a legislator is unable to meet with you – most meetings are with staff.
- Don't expect legislators or staff to be experts on your bill. **Be prepared to explain the issue to them.**
- Don't try to say too much – **focus on one or two issues** and be brief.
- **Don't shy away from meetings** in lawmakers' offices with views opposite your own.
- **Don't be angry**, argumentative, or confrontational in tone, language or demeanor. You can be polite, yet firm in explaining your position.
- **Don't lose credibility** by using bad information or by stretching the truth.
- Don't be put off by non-committal or long-winded answers. **Keep the conversation on track.**
- **Don't forget to be polite** and express gratitude for them meeting with you even if a legislator opposes your position. Remember, there could be future bills that you on which you find agreement. Stay positive and keep lines of communication open for the future.
- **Don't forget to follow up** when new information arises—such as a change in the bill which was of concern to the legislator or when a related event occurs.
- **Don't be intimidated** – you may find these meetings can be enjoyable once you get the hang of it!



## OTHER WAYS TO INTERACT WITH LAWMAKERS

In addition to in-person meetings, there are other useful avenues for outreaching lawmakers.

These include:

- Writing elected officials
- Calling elected officials
- Providing testimony
- Political engagement
- Strength in numbers

## WRITING ELECTED OFFICIALS

Letters and emails to elected officials and their staff are an easy way to communicate your message. (See Appendix for a Sample Letter to an Elected Official.) Here are some tips for writing your lawmakers:

- **Send any communication to your elected official.** Lawmakers are focused on their constituents and issues that matter to them. The only time you will want to reach out to someone who does not represent you is if they hold a leadership role such as a relevant committee chairman, Majority Leader, or Speaker of the House/Assembly.
- **Be Accurate.** Make sure you spell your lawmaker's name correctly, get their title right, and address correspondence to the correct mailing or email address.
- **Keep it short and sweet.** Limit your communication to one page and only focus on one issue or one piece of legislation.
- **Introduce yourself.** If you are a business owner or constituent, say so. Make sure you include whether you are representing yourself or an organization.

- **State Your Purpose.** Be clear about why you are writing them. If you are writing about a particular bill, include the name of the bill and bill number.
- **Be clear about what you are asking.** If you want them to support, oppose, or modify a bill, say so.
- **Share your story.** Your letter should include personal anecdotes or examples of how the legislation will impact you or your business so your elected official can understand why this issue matters to constituents.
- **Be respectful.** Do not use coarse language or make threats such as "I will never vote for you if you support this bill." Close the letter by thanking the lawmaker for taking the time to read it.
- **Share your contact information.** Offer to answer any follow-up questions they may have and provide your mailing address and phone number so they can respond to your letter.





## CALLING ELECTED OFFICIALS

Telephoning your lawmaker is a fast, effective way to advocate, especially when an important issue is coming up for a vote and you would like to see them take a particular action. Other times, it is a good way to connect and provide input on issues on which they are undecided.

It is essential to be prepared before you call your lawmaker. Research ahead of time to see what their position on the issue or legislation is so you can either thank them for their support, encourage them to oppose, or provide them further information that can help their decision-making. (See Appendix for Sample Telephone Script.) Many of the tips for writing your official can be applied to calling your lawmakers as well. Here are some tips for calling your elected official's office:

### Do...

**Identify yourself** and where you are calling from. If you are a constituent, let them know.

**Be clear** and concise as to why you are calling.

**Clearly indicate** your support for or opposition to the specific measure and briefly explain why.

**Know the exact bill** or ordinance title/number and have your talking points and supporting documents in front of you when you call so you can take questions.

**Offer to be a resource** by highlighting your experience in the community and with the issue area.

**Leave your full contact information** or ask if it would be possible to email your concerns to the staffer or legislative official that covers the issue of concern if they are unavailable.



### Don't...

**Do not expect** to speak directly with the lawmaker, who may be on the floor, in a committee meeting, or at a policy luncheon. (However, this can occasionally happen, so be prepared to speak with staff instead.)

**Do not be concerned** if they are not immediately familiar with the issue or need to look it up. Be prepared to quickly summarize the issue/bill for them.

**Do not stray** from the original issue you called about – stay on topic.

**Do not be rude** or argumentative with the staff member or lawmaker for having a differing position. The person answering the phone is often just the 'messenger.'

## GUIDANCE FOR TESTIFYING

Giving legislative testimony is an effective way to educate lawmakers about the impact, whether positive or negative, of proposed bills on their constituents or community. Pet Advocacy Network welcomes and actively seeks opportunities for our staff and members to testify before municipal bodies, state legislatures, and regulatory agencies on issues impacting the pet industry. Legislators and policymakers are receptive to hearing input about proposed legislation. Providing testimony clearly and professionally is an important advocacy tool and can help achieve your legislative goals.

The rules for testifying vary from one legislative body to another. You can find out what the rules are by calling the office of the chairman of the committee that will be holding the hearing. There are two kinds of testimony—written and oral. You can often submit written testimony without testifying orally.

Oral testimony is usually very brief (2–5 minutes) and accompanied by written testimony submitted to the committee. Here are some tips for testifying at public hearings:

### Preparing to Testify

- If an opportunity to testify arises, coordinate your activities with Pet Advocacy Network’s Government Affairs staff, who can provide valuable information and strategic advice to help guide you through the process. We will often have testimony from previous experience on a variety of pet industry issues and can provide guidance in writing your testimony.
- Consult with committee staff in advance to ensure that you

understand the purpose of the hearing, the required number of advance copies of written testimony to provide to committee members, the length of time you will be allotted to speak, and what questions you might be asked.

- Make sure you submit written testimony in the required format. Some committees require submissions electronically in advance.
- Inquire about other witnesses. It is often helpful to know in advance if others will be testifying and their key messages. Hearings are often organized in panels to hear opposing points of view.
- After the hearing, follow up with committee staff to thank them for their guidance during the process and to offer your assistance in the future.

## IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO TESTIFY

- When a committee or regulatory agency announces its intent to hold a hearing, contact committee staff or lawmakers to express your desire to present testimony.
- If possible, seek opportunities to testify in support of proposed legislation, rather than against it. This will help you build relationships with elected officials.
- Call the committee or agency to ask for instructions on how to present testimony.
- If you are unable to attend the hearing in person, ask whether you can submit written testimony. Follow the guidelines in preparing and distributing written testimony. Be sure to meet any deadlines.

*See example of testimony submission on page 33.*

## Drafting Your Testimony

- **Powerful testimony is clear**, concise, delivered with confidence, and demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the issue. Your oral testimony should be short - no longer than 2 to 5 minutes.
- **Rehearse your testimony** to ensure you can deliver it within the timeframe.
- **Research the other side** of the argument. Be prepared to refute the opposition's key points in your testimony or during the question and answer period after you testify.
- **Study the legislation** or regulation under consideration by the committee, as well as any available analyses. The effectiveness of your presentation could be negated by the simple question, "Have you read the bill?" or "Are you aware the bill has been amended?"

### Ideally, testimony should follow this outline:

1. Brief introduction.
2. Thank the committee chairperson and members for the opportunity to speak.
3. State your name, who you are representing, where you are from, and why you are there.
4. State your position as "for" or "against" the proposed bill and identify the bill by name and number.
5. State the action you want the committee to take. Be clear as to whether you want them to approve, reject or modify proposed legislation.
6. Say why you want them to act and provide your personal perspective. Describe the effect of proposed legislation on you and your business.
7. Restate your position at the end of your testimony.
8. Thank the committee again for the opportunity to testify.

## Delivering Your Testimony

- **Arrive early** and sign-up to provide testimony/comments. Make sure you follow any procedures that have been published by the committee and indicate that you wish to testify.
- **Bring enough copies** of your prepared statement for the entire committee and bring a few extras in case they are requested by staff or the committee clerk.
- **If several people are speaking** from the same organization or point of view, **divide up the points to be made**. Try not to repeat points made by other speakers. If all the points you prepared were already made, tell the committee you agree with the prior speakers and urge them to take the appropriate action.
- **Answer only those questions that you can answer correctly**, responding as clearly and succinctly as you can. If you do not know the answer to a question, offer to follow up with the committee.
- **Do not be disappointed** if a small number of committee members are present. Legislators have many competing obligations during the session, so staff will update them on proceedings.
- **Always speak respectfully**, even if you disagree with actions or positions the committee members have taken. Do not be argumentative with committee members or with people giving opposing testimony. Avoid making disparaging remarks about government officials, the government in general, or members of groups with opposing views.

## POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT: CONNECTING WITH CANDIDATES

Elected officials are supposed to be your voice on the federal, state, and local levels. When it comes time to vote, you need to elect someone who will clearly communicate your needs in government. Regardless of your business in the industry, educating yourself on the issues and engaging with the candidates are the best ways to be sure that your voice is heard.

There are several ways you can engage during an election, beyond watching political ads on TV or reading the campaign leaflets in your mailbox.

### Contact the Offices

The local campaign office can be used for much more than requesting a lawn sign. If you have any lingering questions after researching the candidate, a campaign office is the best place to find answers. When contacting the office, it is best to have your questions prepared. Staffers may ask you to send the questions in writing so that they can thoroughly answer them.



### Take Time to See Candidates in Person

In the last few weeks of an election, candidates will be using their time as valuably as possible. For many, this will mean scheduling town hall events or going door to door to meet voters. Take any opportunity you can to see the candidate speak and interact with them.

### Get Involved

Now that you have put effort into learning about the candidates and finding the one that you think will best support you, put effort into helping them get the support of other people.

Call the campaign office and ask for a lawn sign or a bumper sticker. These are both easy ways to advertise for and support your candidate, especially if your home or business is in a busy part of town. Campaigns will gladly accept a donation, but if you have time to volunteer, sign up to hand out campaign literature or work a phone bank or a local event for the candidate. Talking with your neighbors, voter to voter, is a great way to share information about a candidate.

As a businessperson in the community, you can also offer many other important opportunities to candidates. You can contact the campaign about endorsing the candidate at an event of his or her choosing. If you are on a local Chamber of Commerce or other civic organization, inquire about inviting the candidate to address your next meeting. You can gather a group of other local business owners and host a small meet and greet with the candidate to help get the message out or even a fundraiser for the campaign. Events at a retail or manufacturing location or with local business leaders offer the



candidate a great opportunity to discuss employment, taxes, and the importance of local industry and provide a great photo opportunity for the campaign.

### Strength In Numbers

Advocating on legislation that impacts your business does not stop with you. It can affect your employees, your vendors, veterinarians with whom you work, and your customers. Engaging them during a local or state legislative fight could be the difference between success and failure.

### Communicate

Update your contacts with information when an issue arises. Let them know what is at stake and how they can help. For an easier process, keep an up-to-date list of contact information for customers and vendors with whom you do business.

### Get Your Friends and Family Involved

Ask your inner circle to help by contacting legislators to voice their support or opposition to a bill or ordinance. The more voices on an issue, the greater the impact.

### Use Employee Expertise and Customer Experience

No one knows the day-to-day operation of your business and everything it involves better than your employees. Encourage them to share their experiences with customers and legislators or local officials so that the community learns more about your business. If you are comfortable doing so, ask long-term customers if they would be willing to share their experience with the community.

### Work with Other Industry Partners

Issues that impact one sector of the industry have the possibility of impacting several sectors of the industry in time. The same is true with local businesses, where laws or regulations which impact one type of business may cause unintended consequences for other local businesses. Find common ground by explaining these issues to your local business community, vendors, and veterinarians by walking them through how a proposed bill, ordinance, or regulation impacting your business could eventually impact them.

### Gather Signatures

Petitions (online or paper) are a straightforward way to get legislators' attention without asking much of your customers or contacts. They can be particularly effective for a local issue when constituents sign them. Have a petition available to be signed at your store or on your website and then share with local lawmakers or legislators ahead of a meeting or hearing to show local constituent support for your position.



# COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

Effective advocacy goes beyond just meeting with legislators. It involves crafting a compelling story to shape the opinions of the public, key influencers, and policymakers. What you say – and how you say it – can make the difference between success and failure.

Below are some guides on effective social media posts, how to prepare for and survive an interview, how to write press releases, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces, and organizing press conferences. In the appendix are samples of press releases, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces. Each of these can be an effective tool to help tell your story, but it is important to think about how they will work together to help you accomplish your goals. This is where it can be helpful to work with Pet Advocacy Network staff and other professionals to craft a strategy *before* you get started, as it is difficult to recover from a public misstep.

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of these important media tactics, it is important to address some overarching themes that are consistent for any media outreach:

- Media outreach is an important branding tool for your business – whether you engage in legislative action or you simply want to grow your business. It can be a great way to let your community know what you are doing right, and a means of pushing back when you are attacked.
- Every time you engage with the media, you risk negative exposure. Plain and simple. Be sure you know your target audience and whether each medium is the best way to reach that audience. Understand how your

opponents may turn it back on you and always make sure your timing is right.

- Bad timing can make a great press release or social media campaign useless – in fact, worse than useless since your limited time and/or money was used to create these messages. Media outreach should tie you to your desired brand in a way that is interesting to your target audience, and timing is a critical part of that.
- Not all media is good media. Part of timing is knowing when media will help you – or could hurt you. Contrary to the advice of Muhammad Ali and others whose livelihoods depended upon the size of their audience, not all publicity is good publicity. You want the right publicity to reach the right audience. Make sure to do your research before you begin these endeavors.

**Most importantly, there are three keys to any media outreach:**

1. **Relevance:** What is the topic? Who is your target audience? Why will they care about your story?
2. **Person:** Who is writing the piece? Do they have credibility on the subject due to academic or experiential background? Are they a prominent person in the community known to your target audience?
3. **Timing:** Why should your op-ed be published now? Is the op-ed time-sensitive, or is it something that can be published at the convenience of the editor?

Unless you get these right, the value of the media outreach is minimal. For example, there is no point to a January Facebook post about Christmas presents for pets (timing). Likewise, it would not serve a

reptile breeder well to send a press release on his or her sports analysis (person and subject).

Media outreach is all about branding strategy. It is a LOT harder than it looks, so make sure you do it carefully and thoughtfully so you can get it right.

## PRESS RELEASES AND STATEMENTS

While the terms are often used interchangeably, there is a difference between a press release and a press statement.

- A press release is generally used for new information such as an announcement or update. It is usually longer than a statement because it is used to provide facts and information, and often also includes one or two quotes from people involved with the organization or information being shared.
- A press statement is issued to share your reaction to something that has happened. Often, it expresses support or disapproval of an event. It is concise and often comprised of just a few sentences.

A press release is information for the media to use to share news about your organization. It is meant to make a reporter's job easier, so that they have quotes and background available for an article, radio or TV program, or some other medium without having to spend time looking for it.

In addition to providing the media with information and quotes, a press release may increase your organization's credibility with targeted press outlets, thus

expanding your influence to targeted end consumers of the information. Traditionally, press releases are laid out in a specific structure before and after the body of the text.

Here are the basic questions that any press release needs to answer in the body text:

- **Who** is making the statement?
- **What** is the issue about?
- **When** is the issue or topic happening or being addressed – in other words: make things timely, so reporters care!
- **Where** are things happening (local issue, state issue, national issue – if there's an event, where is it located, etc.)?
- **Why** is this happening (what makes the issue or topic relevant)?
- **How** did it happen – relevant background details on an event or something that occurred?

When creating a press release, provide the **most relevant** information first, then explain details in descending order of importance.

[Here](#) is an example of a press release.

A press statement is used to give feedback or public comment about an already concluded event. It is basically a long quote directly attributable to a person and will likely be used in its entirety by media outlets that pick it up. The title should say what is being reacted to with the statement and what organization it is from, then a subheading with a person it should be attributed to.

[Here](#) is an example of a press statement.

*See other examples of statements and press releases in the appendix.*

Other considerations for press releases and statements include:

- Make sure you proofread your release/statement for formatting, grammar, and facts.
- Always include contact information at the top and a summary of your organization at the bottom (boilerplate). To indicate the end of your release/statement, use three hashtags (###), followed by boilerplate standard wording.
- Know who your target outlets are, and why. A release/statement regarding a pet issue in a suburb of Sacramento, California, would probably not be of interest to *The New York Times*, but it may be valuable to *The Sacramento Bee*. If it is regarding pet stores, contacting the sports reporter is a waste of your time – but the business editor may be interested.
- Know who your target audience is. you want lawmakers to learn something, craft your words and target outlets for that audience. If you want the public to be educated or to back your effort, your language choice and style should be aimed at the relevant public demographics. When addressing complex legislation with a public constituent audience, refrain from using industry jargon.
- Be aware of the risks – press releases/statements are fully in your voice and provide the message you want in the public eye. But they can be taken out of context by uninformed or unfriendly journalists and commentators. Proofread it very carefully, have someone else read it, and better yet, have someone not inside your organization or industry read it to make sure it makes sense.

## INTERVIEW TIPS

Interviews are a key method of communicating to the public. However, they have tremendous risk if the interviewee is unprepared. Frequently, it's better to **not** do the interview if you are not prepared with facts and how to present them. Saying the factually wrong thing or doing something that makes you look foolish will damage your credibility. Be prepared with facts, your talking points, and/or the best way to communicate your message.

Here are some key points to remember:

### For live and pre-recorded interviews:

- If you want something used as unattributed information (“on background”) or simply for the reporter’s knowledge but not for use in the report (“off the record”), be sure to say so explicitly before providing the information, AND wait for the interviewer to agree to it.
- Keep your answers short. On podcasts and radio shows, stick to 20 to 30 seconds per answer. For TV, stick to 10 to 15 seconds. This helps your answers to be consistent and helps prevent you from being taken out of context.
- Stick to your topic and talking points. Do not get sidetracked or ramble on to fill an awkward silence.
- Not all reporters are friendly or neutral. Be aware of the person and outlet with whom you are speaking. Do your research on their potential biases and ask about the angle of the segment.
- Be aware of your end goal at all times and let that guide your tactics during the interview. Do you want to be aggressive, placating, informative, or

some combination thereof? If pressed by the reporter, do you want to deflect or take the issue head-on?

- If you can, make your own recording of the interview in case you have to ask for a correction.
- It is okay to say no to an interview. Sometimes being left out of a story, or being described in a neutral fashion, is better than putting yourself at risk of targeting or being taken out of context.
- For on-camera interviews or TV, wear appropriate clothes. Sometimes business attire is necessary depending on the television outlet and your target audience. Keep in mind that stripes and patterns almost always are distracting and may not show up well on-camera.

#### For e-mail interviews:

- Keep your answers informative but succinct.
- The relevant rules for TV and radio interviews apply here, such as researching the outlet and awareness of end goals.
- Be prepared to help the reporter with background or putting him/her in touch with other sources of information (ones that share your perspective on the issue) if you have them to share.

#### Other tips:

- It's okay to say you do not know the answer, or that you will get back to the reporter. This is much better than providing a wrong or incomplete answer.
- Prepare, prepare, prepare. Do your homework and know the issue so you can anticipate the questions that could be asked and be able to answer them with ease and credibility.
- Practice if you are going to be doing a live interview. You can "know" to say something at a specific time in an interview or in response to a particular question, but it is difficult to execute if you freeze up due to nerves or hostile questioning.
- It is often best to have one or two designated spokespersons. Having the same message, whether defending your company against attacks or pushing for legislation, is important, and it is easier to train just one or two people to be comfortable in front of a camera, in public speaking, and your messages and talking points.





## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has become an essential tool for businesses to communicate with customers, allies, opponents, and politicians. While some aspects of social media outreach have grown in financial cost, it is still an affordable and timely way to reach preferred audiences. You also have full control over what information is provided.

However, social media is not without huge risks. Posting may open your page and comments section to “hijacking” by those who do not agree with you, or do not like your business. The benefits of social media are many, but you have to be savvy about how you post on social media, who you target, and keep track of interactions on your posts. Below are some tips for how to best use Facebook and Twitter, two of the most influential social media platforms.

### Facebook:

For many, Facebook is a place for supporters and for promoting the “soft side” of business. Twitter is often where political outreach and connecting with decision-makers takes place. Our suggestions incorporate these general practices.

- **Keep content fresh** by mixing business/industry updates with entertaining content.
- **Drive engagement** by posting open-ended questions and inviting opinions.
- **Monitor and respond to comments** on your page. While you do not need to respond to every comment your business receives, you should always be monitoring the conversations taking place (this is crucial in order to stay on top of potential crises).

- **Testimonials/Reviews** – If you can show that your existing fans trust you, your new fans will too.
- **Use images and videos** as often as possible – Attention grabbing images/videos drive engagement by enticing people to read the text.
- **Be pro-active** about gaining followers – Nobody cares as much about getting support for your business as you do. Follow people, follow groups that can support you, and engage with those individuals and groups.
- **Consider spending a little money** – Over the last several years, Facebook has forced its users to spend money to reach audiences. Currently, Facebook posts reach approximately three percent of your audience, and business pages are no longer a priority in Facebook’s algorithm for personal newsfeeds. Paid promotions and ads can improve that outreach and can be targeted to both existing followers and those who fit the demographic for who you want to target for increased following.

### Facebook Live:

- Unlike the rest of your posts, **Facebook Live notifies your entire following that your video is online** and allows you to interact with your followers as they comment in real time.
- **Provide a good description** – An attention-grabbing headline can be the difference in whether someone scrolls or stays to hear more.
- **Promote the video ahead of time** – Give your followers advance notice so they make plans to tune in for your live broadcast.
- **Experiment with different times** – Look at Facebook insights to see when your audience is usually online.



- **Be authentic** – The more it looks like you care, the more the viewers will care.
- **Be prepared** – Always have a script, draft key points, set a time limit, and have a few questions ready in case the comments section slows down.
- Be sure you or someone else is able to **respond to comments below the video** while you are live.

### Twitter:

- **Keep it short and sweet** – Concise tweets make an impact. Include a link if you have a longer message to communicate. Be aware of the character limit (280 including spaces).
- **Use visuals** – Much like Facebook, adding images will increase engagement and get followers to stop scrolling.
- **Look out for relevant hashtags** – Expand your reach and tap into relevant conversations by using hashtags as often as possible.
- **Connect with your audience** by monitoring retweets and replies – Be responsive to any questions, comments, and criticisms that come your way. Switch to Direct Message to resolve any complex issues that may arise.
- **Post open ended questions** or run a poll – This is a great way to interact with your audience and get the conversation started.
- **Quality over quantity** – Double-check that you are sharing relevant information that gives your followers a reason to stick around. Build a strong, trustworthy presence by ensuring that the information you put out is of the highest quality.
- **Tag important policymakers**, private sector influencers/influencer groups, or relevant media outlets.

### LinkedIn:

- **Make content with a professional tone** and gear posts to an industry audience.
- **Use visuals, key statistics**, new studies and fact-based reasoning to disseminate information.
- **Remain active** and engage with audience through comments and reposting strategies.
- **Do not be too active** on the platform and only post business-centric content
- **Tag policymakers**, private sector influencers/influencer groups or relevant media outlets. LinkedIn will sometimes restrict you from what organizations you can tag.



### OP-EDS

Controlling the message is a key component of any media, public, customer, or lawmaker outreach. Interviews and press releases allow some control, but they also leave up to other people and entities how to frame your message. An opinion-editorial, or “op-ed” provides almost complete

message control. The challenge is getting them placed in and amongst many other subjects, since most outlets publish just a handful of op-eds per week – out of dozens of submissions for a small local paper or hundreds for larger outlets.

The biggest weakness of an op-ed is the editor gatekeeper. The piece's first audience is **not** the reader. The audience is the editor first – which means any piece needs to be carefully crafted to be relevant to the outlet's audience and current editorial topics. An editor is under no obligation to run an op-ed, no matter how important you think it is.

Remember, the keys to a successful op-ed are person, timing, and subject. The author must be someone who is an expert on, is impacted by, or has some other relevance to the topic the op-ed addresses. The topic must be timely, either directly involving or related to topics that are currently in the news or top-of-mind for your target audience, like lawmakers considering legislation.

Another consideration is the angle of the piece. Should you take a bold tone, an educational one, or a praise-worthy one? Is the outlet you are submitting your op-ed to friendly, neutral, or opposed to your position?

Every outlet has different standards on length, biographical information requirements, photos, and how to pitch an op-ed. Be sure to research the best e-mail address to send it to. It is usually best to give at least 24 hours for consideration of the piece, though time-sensitive material may require a faster deadline. Always give a deadline to the editor.

Most outlets require exclusivity for the submission. In other words, do not submit

the same piece to The Boston Globe and The New York Times unless one of the outlets has already rejected the piece. Double-check republishing – some outlets allow pieces to be republished elsewhere.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Similar to op-eds, Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are a way for the public to get an opinion in local newspapers and online outlets. They are typically 150 to 250 words (but always research the word count limit for the publication you are targeting before you start writing). They are easier to get published than op-eds because of the higher number considered for publication by outlets.

Frequently, a paper only runs LTEs that are reactions to a story they've published. This is good, because the chance they will run your LTE commenting on one of their stories is high. If you are commenting on a article, you have to send it the LTE quickly as they usually are run within a week of the original story. Don't wait a month to send in your LTE.

## PRESS CONFERENCES

Press conferences are among the most expensive and most risky – but also most potentially beneficial – method of communicating with the press.

A telephone press conference is exactly what it sounds like – a press conference on a phone. You host a call, and the press dial in to listen and ask questions after your presentation.

This is a less risky, less expensive form of a press conference that allows you to potentially reach influencers who may not be in your immediate vicinity. This is very

advantageous if you are addressing an issue with wide geographical implications or interest, and not all influencers (reporters, editors, etc.) can make it to your physical location. It also allows you to control who speaks to the press.

A traditional press conference has more hard costs and requires far more logistics – travel, podium(s), microphone(s), sound system equipment, etc. And if few influencers show up, it could be embarrassing for your cause and a waste of effort.

The advantages of a traditional press conference over a phone press conference are visuals and better ability to build relationships with in-person interactions. Photos and video of the conference can be powerful tools for your cause. And if you organize your press conference near places of influence (state capitols, for example), politicians and business leaders who are on your side may be able to speak at the event.

Regardless of which press conference you organize, be sure to send out at least one media alert before, and one press release detailing what happened at the conference after it. Follow up with press prior to the event to ensure attendance, and afterwards to ensure coverage.

## **RAPID RESPONSE - KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

Whether in your town, city, county, state, or even in Washington, DC, it is important to know what is going on that can affect you, your business, and the industry. Here are simple and free ways to keep an eye on what may come your way:

- Google Alerts – Signing up for these will keep you aware of most things related to keywords you request. Be sure to experiment with the keywords (such as “puppy” or “yellow tang” or “Pet Advocacy Network” or Animal Animal Welfare Act”) to make sure you get the ones that most benefit you.
- Visit the Google News site and use settings to set up your alerts.
- Sign up for your community’s relevant newsletters and social media accounts. Your community can be your neighborhood, business organizations, local/state/national associations, etc. Likewise, sign up for pet industry, activist, and politician newsletters and social media updates to follow what is happening.
- Watch for city, county, state, and federal political committees, and regulatory agency announcements that affect your issues. Mailing lists or weekly visits to relevant government websites can be an easy way to know what politicians and regulators are doing related to your business.
- Once you have the information, be sure to circulate it among those who may support you, such as customers, employees, other associations, and Pet Advocacy Network. Your supporters cannot stand with you if they are not aware of what is happening. You can use social media – especially Facebook and Twitter – as well as newsletters, e-mail blasts, and media alerts to do this.

# APPENDIX

**Please Note:** The materials provided in the following pages are meant to be general examples for you to learn from as you create your own pieces. In many cases, you will need to craft your messages according to the specific policies that are most applicable to your community.

1. How a Bill Becomes a Law
2. Sample Meeting Request
3. Sample Phone Script
4. Sample Testimony
5. Sample Letter to the Editor
6. Sample Op/Ed(s)
7. Sample Press Releases
8. Economic Fact Sheet
9. Pet Advocacy Network Information Handout
10. Other Resources

## HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

For most states, this is the process:

### Introduction

A bill is drafted and introduced in the chamber in which the legislator serves (either the Senate or House of Representatives/Assembly). The legislation is then assigned a bill number.

The same legislative language with a different bill number may be introduced in the opposite chamber of the legislative body. This legislation is known as a “companion bill.”

### Committee Action

Once a bill is introduced, it is assigned to a committee or subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the issue the bill addresses. The committee or subcommittee researches, discusses, and suggests changes (or “amendments”) to the legislation. The committee or subcommittee will often hold a public hearing to receive testimony from supporters and opponents of the bill. A bill must first be considered and approved by a full committee before advancing in the legislative process.

If the bill has a cost for implementation, many legislatures require that it also be considered by a fiscal committee such as the Appropriations Committee or Finance Committee.

If approved by a full committee, most legislatures then require a bill to go through a Rules Committee or Calendar Committee before advancing to the Senate or House/Assembly floor for a vote. This is usually a formality to check for technical issues, but this is another hurdle for legislation to advance.

### Vote of Full Chamber

The members of the chamber in which the bill was introduced will debate and consider amendments to the legislation before voting on it.

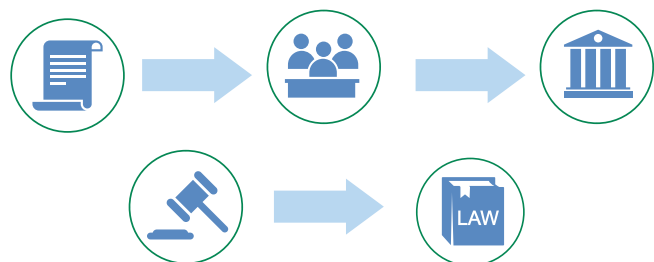
If a bill is approved by one chamber, it will be sent to the other chamber, where it will go through the same process – committee approval and full chamber debate and approval.

### Final Approval/Conference Committee

Both chambers must agree on the same version of the final bill. If the second chamber amends the bill, it must go back to the first chamber for approval of their changes. If the two chambers cannot agree on the amendments, the bill may be sent to a Conference Committee in order to work out differences in the legislation. If a compromise bill is agreed upon and approved by the Conference Committee, it would then be sent back to both chambers for final approval.

### Executive Approval

A bill approved by both chambers is sent to the Governor, who can either sign the bill into law, veto it, or allow the bill to become law without his or her signature. If vetoed by the Governor, the two chambers would have to garner a supermajority of votes (this differs state by state) in order to override the veto and enact the bill into law.





## SAMPLE MEETING REQUEST LETTER

### Pet Sale Ban Example

Dear *[official]*:

My name is *[name]* and I am the owner of *[store]* located at *[address]* . I am writing today to request a meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss *[legislation # or ordinance title, if available]*, which would more than likely force me to move out of *[jurisdiction]* or go out of business altogether.

For *[xx]* years, I have cared for puppies in my store(s) here in *[jurisdiction]*. I have become part of the community over the last *[xx]* years, paying taxes, participating in community events such as *[list events]*, and providing *[xx]* jobs that offer a variety of skills to my employees including *[list skills]*.

Like you, I want to do everything I can to ensure that the health and well-being of these dogs remains the priority from the day they are born until they find their perfect home. I know that is the goal of *[legislation # again]*, but the way it is currently written it would actually do the opposite. It would force me to close my doors, as almost all of my business comes from the sale of dogs. It would penalize my employees and take away their jobs, all in the hope of “sending a message” to the bad breeders I refuse to do business with in the first place.

I would like to meet with you and provide input so I can help you improve this ordinance . I know that there are other ways for us to partner in taking a stand against bad, out-of-state breeders in a manner that would not victimize responsible businesses .

I am available *[list three blocks of time over the next few days]*, and I would be happy to meet you in your office at your convenience. Additionally, I would like to invite you to come to *[store]* and see for yourself the care and attention we give to the puppies in our store. I think you will be pleasantly surprised.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

*[name]*

*[address]*

*[email address/phone number]*

## SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT

When you call your lawmaker's office, ask the receptionist to connect you to the staff member who handles animal care or pet issues.

**1** Hi, my name is (your name), and I am a constituent of (Senator/Representative/Assemblyman's name).

May I please speak with the aide that handles animal care and pet issues?

*[If the appropriate staffer is not available, ask for their email address so that you can follow up with your inquiry. You might be asked if you would like to leave a voicemail, so be prepared with a short message that includes your name, the issue/bill number, and your phone number so they can return your call.]*

**2** If you are connected to the staffer that handles animal care or pet issues, use this script as a guide to discuss the issue.

Hi, my name is (your name), and I am a constituent of (Senator/Representative name).

I am calling today regarding (bill name/bill number/issue description), which I am for/against.

I am concerned about how this (bill name/bill number/issue description) can impact my business and community in the following ways:  
(insert ways the issue can impact you/your business/community).

Do you know if (Senator/Representative name) supports or opposes (bill name/bill number/issue description)?

[Wait for feedback]

**3** If the lawmaker is **supportive** of your position:

Thank you for that information. I'm pleased to hear that (Senator/Representative name) is supportive/opposed to this (bill name/bill number/issue description)

May I give you my contact information so I can be a resource on this issue?

[Wait for feedback.]

Thank you for your time and support on this issue.

**4** If the lawmaker is **not supportive** of your position, or is **undecided on the issue**:

Thank you for that information. May I ask why (Senator/Representative name) (has taken that position/is undecided on the issue)?

[Wait for feedback]

Thank you for elaborating. I would like to encourage (Senator/Representative name) to support/oppose this issue because (insert a brief summary of the issue/bill number and why you support/oppose it. Focus on how it affects your community. Use relevant facts as well as a personal story if appropriate).

[Wait for Feedback]

**5** I appreciate your time today and would like to follow up with additional information in writing. May I please have your email address?

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me.



TESTIMONY OF THE PET ADVOCACY NETWORK  
FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE  
NEW HAMPSHIRE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE  
OF SB368

April 11th, 2022

POSITION: Opposed

The Pet Advocacy Network appreciates the opportunity to offer our views regarding SB368, a bill unlicensed sale of live animals and establishing the agricultural hearings officer revolving fund. As the country's largest pet trade association, representing the interests of all segments of the pet industry throughout the United States, the Pet Advocacy Network counts among its members national associations, organizations, corporations and individuals involved in the commercial pet trade. More specifically, the Pet Advocacy Network represents the interests of, pet stores, suppliers, distributors, pet supply manufacturers, retailers and pet owners throughout the state of New Hampshire and across the country.

Let me start by saying that the Pet Advocacy Network is committed to conservation. We have for many years provided a well-respected animal care certification program that is widely utilized by not only persons in the commercial pet trade but shelters, humane societies and institutes of higher education as well. Our association has long been recognized as the voice for a responsible pet trade, and we routinely advocate legislative and regulatory proposals establishing governmental mandates where appropriate to advance the public interest and welfare of pets and the environment. The Pet Advocacy Network works closely with US Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior and CITES to ensure effective enforcement of the federal Animal Welfare Act, management of threatened or endangered species and control of invasive species, and have since its inception. We regularly work with federal and state agencies as well as local governments to advance animal welfare and environmental interests.

Despite the new title reflecting the Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food's reason for requesting the bill be introduced - to prevent the unlicensed sale of live animals -, the proposed text does nothing to solve this problem. What this bill actually does is to increase the fines on ANY pet vendor, appropriate funds disproportionately within the department and create a moral hazard for the department.

Although the department has said it needs tools to address limited situations where a person continues to transfer live animals after their pet vendor license has been revoked, this bill actually targets all pet vendors and is likely to be far more harmful to those who are licensed and responsible than those who have had their license revoked.

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## SAMPLE TESTIMONY cont.

While this bill proposes to create a fund of \$100,000 through the collection of fines, this model makes clear that the real target is those pet vendors holding a current and valid license, as revoked licenses are rare and could only generate \$5,000 at most. It also places the burden on pet vendors for supporting all four divisions of the department, not merely the division responsible for their inspection.

Finally, this bill creates a significant moral hazard for the department. It makes the funds available for the salaries of the inspectors dependent upon the revenues generated by the fines, then puts the inspectors whose salaries are at stake in charge of determining the cost of those fines. This will certainly result in a practice of handing out maximum fines for even the most minor violation.

The Pet Advocacy Network strongly urges the committee to send Senate Bill 368 to study. Should lawmakers and the department wish to discuss an appropriate method for addressing the unlicensed sale of live animals we would be happy to participate.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Robert Likins  
Executive Vice President  
Pet Advocacy Network



## SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Barring animal imports not on approved ‘white list’ will cripple many pet-related businesses

Over 90 million American households [have a pet](#), and the 85 Ohioans at Vitakraft Sunseed proudly supply quality products to care for those animals, many of those products manufactured at our Weston, Ohio, facility using ingredients from local farmers. But an amendment to pending federal legislation that was intended to increase economic competitiveness and to help prevent future pandemics will have a negative impact on pet ownership and on businesses that provide pet and pet care products.

[Section 71102 of H.R. 4521, the COMPETES Act](#), proposes Lacey Act amendments that will keep over 200,000 animal species off a new import-approved white list until they are reviewed. This will delay pet animal imports and impose a costly and lengthy evaluation process that will cripple many businesses nationwide. Many will fail, already challenged by supply chain disruptions and skyrocketing product costs. The effect will be felt across local economies, hurting farmers, retail stores, and more.

We support the COMPETES provisions that advance our economy and the population’s health. But Sec. 71102 is unnecessary and will do irreparable harm to pet ownership and pet businesses. I urge Sens. Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman and their peers to remove it from the bill.

Brent Weinmann,

Weston

*Brent Weinmann is CEO of Vitakraft Sunseed.*

### Op-Ed for the Hartford Courant

**Dr. Arnold L. Goldman DVM, MPH, CEM, Canton, CT**

This Friday, March 1, the Connecticut Assembly's Environment Committee will hear public testimony on HB5386, a bill that will prohibit pet stores from selling dogs, cats and rabbits unless they are acquired from a shelter or rescue. These restrictions are identical to, and undoubtedly inspired by, those that went into effect in California just 10 weeks ago.

The bill was submitted despite the fact that five years ago Connecticut set a worthy example for the rest of the country by establishing thoughtful, reasoned sourcing laws to protect the well-being of pets. Developed by a task force comprised of state senators and representatives, veterinarians, and other animal care community experts, the final rules set in place comprehensive statewide requirements for pet stores.

As a Connecticut-licensed veterinarian actively engaged since 1988 in shaping animal welfare and veterinary medicine public policy—as well as a member of the task force that developed the sourcing laws—I am appalled that state lawmakers appear to be sprinting to become followers of California, rather than acting to reinforce our state's position as a leader.

The pet store laws and regulations that Connecticut put into place in 2014 are among the strictest in the country. Pet stores are required to acquire puppies only from USDA-licensed and inspected breeders; have puppies examined by a veterinarian before they are offered for sale and at least every 15 days thereafter; make sourcing, birth and medical records readily available; and provide consumer warranties for health and genetics. At least three other states—New Jersey, Virginia and Arizona—have subsequently implemented nearly duplicate requirements.

There is no evidence to show that Connecticut's pet sourcing laws are a failure. Why would we rush to follow California's new law, which at just over two months old, is unproven? It is too early to know what the impact on pet welfare in California will be. What is known is that pet purchasers in the state are no longer protected by the same warranties pet stores offered, and small local pet stores will lose a primary connection to their loyal customers, and potentially have to close their doors forever.

Blanket, statewide sales bans are a hasty reaction to well-intended concerns regarding animal health and safety. They paint responsible breeders with the same brush as those who put profit over animal well-being, hurt small businesses, and remove consumer protections that provide important peace of mind to families bringing home a new pet.

## SAMPLE OP-ED (CONT'D)

It would be foolhardy to set aside the extensive research and effort that Connecticut lawmakers and animal care experts put into developing our sourcing laws in favor of an untested ban.

New Englanders have a well-earned reputation of being sensible, not impulsive. If there are animal care issues in our state that need to be addressed, our lawmakers' first order of business should be a thorough look into their cause, including an evaluation of pet stores, breeders, shelters and rescues. Part of this research should be an assessment of our current sourcing laws' effectiveness.

Tom Brady didn't lead the Patriots to six Super Bowl championships by recklessly throwing the ball when loud, angry opposing linemen were rushing at him. I urge our lawmakers to discount the emotional rhetoric that California capitulated to. Like Brady, we need to reinforce our leadership by taking a careful look at the playing field first. Only then will we be able to develop a rational, comprehensive solution that protects animal well-being, removes the bad actors, and safeguards consumer protections and responsible small businesses.





### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Vice President of Communications and Membership

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### **Pet Advocacy Network Invites Pet Care Community to D.C. Fly-In This Fall**

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – July 7, 2022 - The Pet Advocacy Network invites the responsible pet care community to meet with lawmakers on Capitol Hill at the Fifth Annual Pet Care Community D.C. Fly-In on Wednesday, Sept. 21. The event brings together people involved in pet care with their elected officials during a day of scheduled meetings to talk about issues related to pets, pet care and the human-animal bond.

“While the fly-in was highly successful when held completely virtual the past two years due to the pandemic, we are thrilled that we can expect to once again host these meetings in person on Capitol Hill this fall,” said Mike Bober, president and CEO of the Pet Advocacy Network. “Constituents can have a significant influence on their elected officials by sharing first-hand accounts of how legislation at all levels of government affects them.”

Fly-in participants will:

- Share their personal stories and express concerns to government representatives on pet-related issues
- Connect with lawmakers and their staff to build relationships so they can more readily weigh in when potentially positive, or harmful, future legislative issues arise
- Network and collaborate with like-minded pet professionals on business and advocacy challenges and opportunities

The meetings with lawmakers will be scheduled in advance by the Pet Advocacy Network. Participants will be given talking points on a variety of pet-related topics including the impact of shipping delays and restrictions, pet food products and their production process, the advantages and future of integrating animals into educational settings, and more.

Prior to the event, participants will be able to learn the most up-to-date findings and studies on pet welfare to ensure they have all the tools needed to effectively advocate for the day. Additionally, the Pet Advocacy Network and our allies will honor Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.) for his years of service as one of the only veterinarians to ever serve in Congress.

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## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE cont.

During last year's fly-in, more than 60 people conducted nearly 100 virtual meetings with members of Congress and their staff throughout the day. Participants represented a wide cross-section of the pet care community, including retail company owners, product suppliers, animal caregivers, veterinarians, and leaders of pet trade groups. This year, Pet Advocacy Network anticipates more attendees as the event once again returns to Capitol Hill with face-to-face meetings.

There is no cost to participate in the fly-in, and everyone within the responsible pet care community is encouraged to come. Registration is online [PetAdvocacy.org/events](https://PetAdvocacy.org/events). For questions, email the Pet Advocacy Network at [info@petadvocacy.org](mailto:info@petadvocacy.org).

###

### About Pet Advocacy Network

The [Pet Advocacy Network](https://PetAdvocacy.org), formerly known as the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), connects the experience and expertise of the responsible pet care community to lawmakers and governing bodies, advocating for legislative and regulatory priorities at the local, state, federal and international levels. Since 1971, the organization has worked to promote animal well-being and responsible pet ownership, foster environmental stewardship, and ensure access to healthy pets, including small animals, cats, dogs, fish, reptiles and birds. Pet Advocacy Network members include retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, wholesale distributors, manufacturers' representatives, pet hobbyists, and other trade organizations.



## SAMPLE STATEMENT



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**August 17, 2022**

**Media Contact**

Lynne Taylor

Marketing and Communications Coordinator

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**Statement from Pet Advocacy Network on Positive Court Ruling  
for the Hawaii Aquarium Fishery**

Pet Advocacy Network Executive Vice President Bob Likins:

“The Pet Advocacy Network welcomes the court's decision on Earth Justice's motion for summary judgment. Although we recognize that this is just one step in the process, we are very pleased with the court's decision. Hawaii's near-shore fishery is likely the best managed in the world, and we have always believed that we would prevail on the facts of the case if we could endure the delays and expenses thrown at us by parties that oppose a fishery in any form. The fishers and their families who rely on fish collecting for a living have struggled since Hawaii prohibited aquarium fishing in 2017, and we will continue to campaign to resuscitate the aquarium fisheries and reinstate the fishers' licenses. We hope that soon these fishers will be able to responsibly gather a sustainable amount of these limited species so that they may earn a living and contribute to the vitality of the local economy.”

###

**About Pet Advocacy Network**

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# 2021 Economic Impact of the U.S. Pet Sector

The U.S. pet sector contributes \$260.5 billion directly and indirectly to the U.S. economy. The care and companionship of pets is integral to not only the emotional and physical well-being of people, but also to the strength and stability of our economy.

**\$260.5 billion**  
in total economic output,  
**\$174 billion** in annual gross  
domestic product



**Compared to  
\$221 billion** in  
total economic  
output in 2015

**2.78  
million  
jobs are  
supported  
by the pet  
sector**



**\$23.40 billion**  
paid in taxes

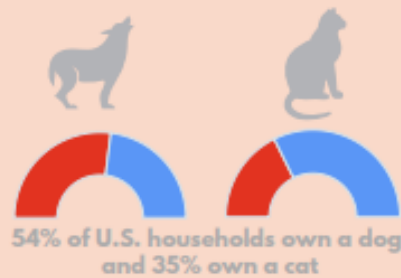


by the industry at  
the federal, state,  
and local levels

**84.9  
million  
households  
in the U.S.  
have at  
least one  
pet**



**Americans own 186  
million dogs and cats**



**23 million U.S. households brought  
home a new pet between spring of  
2019 and summer of 2022**

**U.S. households spent \$93.95 billion on  
their pets**

Pet food,  
including pet  
treats, is the  
largest expense  
for pet owners. In  
2021, Americans  
spent \$50 billion  
on pet food and  
treats.



Economic Impact Data sourced from: Center for Economic Analysis, Michigan State University through the Animal Policy Group and Animal Health Economics, LLC.  
Pet ownership data sourced from: APPA National Pet Owners Survey: 2021-2022.





## About Pet Advocacy Network

Since 1971, the Pet Advocacy Network (formerly known as the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council) has been a leading voice on legislative and regulatory issues addressing pet ownership, companion animal health and well-being, invasive species, and zoonotic disease prevention. The Pet Advocacy Network and the responsible pet care community are dedicated to ensuring that the animals in our care are handled and provided for appropriately, treated with kindness and respect, and that pets do not cause environmental or human health problems. Our work focuses on:

### ANIMAL WELFARE AND CARE

The Pet Advocacy Network has worked with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for over 40 years to encourage effective enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) to help to protect animals and the families that bring them into their homes. We support ongoing review of these regulations to ensure that companion animals are raised in humane conditions consistent with appropriate animal care standards and the best available science and data.

We partner with the responsible pet care community and experts such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on resources to support animal health and prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases. These include industry-wide animal standards of care, best management practices and care sheets for breeders, distributors, groomers, retailers and hobbyists and the Pet Store Pro® Zoonotic Disease Prevention program.

### PET OWNERSHIP

The greatest predictor of a successful lifelong pet connection is education. Allergies, available space, and family members' ages, among other factors, must be considered when selecting a pet. We work to oppose legislation which creates barriers to educated pet choice, thus impeding opportunities to be responsible pet owners and potentially jeopardizing pets and owners alike by driving them to unregulated or fraudulent animal sources. To help retailers educate their customers on proper care of their new companion, we offer a series of basic care sheets for a wide variety of pets.

### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

We co-founded Habitattitude™ with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to encourage prospective pet owners to make wise pet choices through education on the risk of invasive species to the environment, economy, and human health.

We collaborate with veterinary and human health experts to develop and distribute educational programs and resources to minimize the impact of diseases on pets, people, and the environment. These include our Recommendations for Antibiotic Stewardship in Companion Animals and a Healthy Herp Handling poster.

#### OUR MISSION:

To champion pets and responsible pet professionals with expertise and integrity.

#### OUR VISION:

A future with expanded opportunities to enjoy the companionship of healthy and well-treated pets, in which responsible pet professionals are respected and seen as having the best interests of pets in mind.

## OTHER RESOURCES

Additional Site to Find State and Federal Elected Officials:

[https://ballotpedia.org/Elected\\_Officials\\_Lookup](https://ballotpedia.org/Elected_Officials_Lookup)

Pet Advocacy Network Legislative State & Federal Issues Map

<https://petadvocacy.org/state-federal-issues>

Pet Advocacy Network Advocacy Campaigns

<https://petadvocacy.org/advocacy-campaigns>

Pet Advocacy Network Animal Care Guides & Resources

<https://petadvocacy.org/care-guides-retail-resources>

Pet Advocacy Network Economic Resources

<https://petadvocacy.org/economics>

For Additional Information or to Get Involved, Contact Pet Advocacy Network:

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