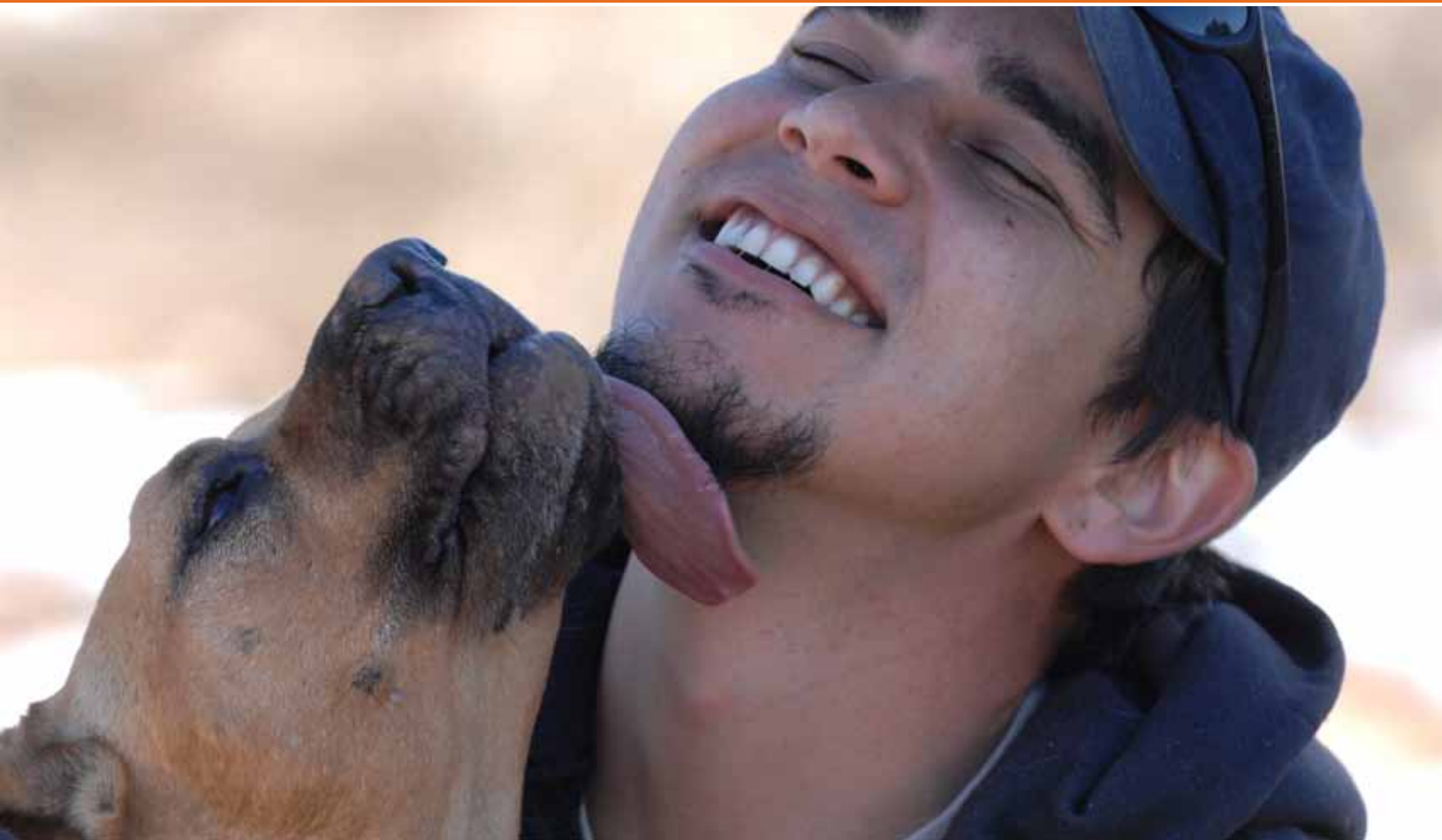




Best Friends
ANIMAL SOCIETY

How to Help Prevent Breed Discrimination in Your Community

www.bestfriends.org



Our Mission: No More Homeless Pets

Best Friends is working with you and with humane groups all across the country to bring about a time when homeless, unwanted animals are no longer being destroyed in shelters, and when every healthy dog or cat can be guaranteed a good life in a caring home.



It can happen in any city or town. Someone is badly injured by a dog. If that dog happens to be identified by the press as a pit bull, the story is covered extensively by the media. Within days, local government officials call for a ban on all pit-bull-type dogs. This type of “panic policymaking” based on anger and fear often leads to ineffective breed-discrimination laws.

These laws not only fail to protect the public from dangerous dogs, they can result in the deaths of thousands of good dogs who are destroyed simply because they are or look like pit bulls. Breed-discrimination laws also hurt responsible people who may be forced to choose between their beloved dog and their home.

YOU can help stop breed discrimination and make your community safer by becoming informed about the issue and taking the proven, effective steps detailed in this action kit.

Animal advocates like you have successfully defeated and repealed breed-discrimination

measures throughout the country. For example, in 2009-10, Best Friends Animal Society, through its “Pit Bulls: Saving America’s Dog” campaign, worked with energized citizens in Elgin, Illinois, to defeat an effort by city leaders to discriminate by breed (see page 10).

This action kit provides resources, tools and examples that can help you and other concerned animal lovers in your community stop breed discrimination and save the lives of dogs. Here’s how you can make a difference for dogs and people in your community.

Pit Bulls: Saving America’s Dog

The goals of this Best Friends campaign are to restore the image of pit bulls and challenge breed discrimination. For more information, go to pitbulls.bestfriends.org. In particular, check out the Tools to Use section.

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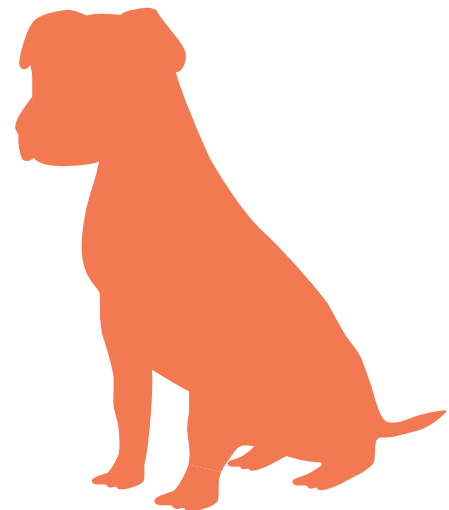
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1. Contact Best Friends

If you are not already part of our “Pit Bulls: Saving America’s Dog” campaign, you can join us and learn more at pitbulls.bestfriends.org. You’ll also want to sign up to receive alerts on our Advocacy for Animals website, and of course, visit your Go Local page at network.bestfriends.org.

If there are any proposed breed-discrimination measures in your area, please let our team know by contacting edfritz@bestfriends.org. The Best Friends team will:

- Send a letter to government officials from one of our attorneys opposing the measure and instead recommending proven public-safety legislation such as breed-neutral dangerous-dog laws, anti-tethering laws and leash laws.
- Post alerts and e-mail messages to our Action Team and Best Friends members in the community.
- If appropriate, send a letter to the editor stating the case against breed-discriminatory laws. Please send us the names of your local newspapers and websites.

2. Contact More Friends

There are a number of other public resources in addition to Best Friends that can help you prevent breed discrimination. Some of the resources used by Best Friends include:

- **Bless the Bullies:** www.blessthebullies.com
- **StopBSL:** www.stopbsl.com

- **KCDog blog:** btoellner.typepad.com/kcdogblog
- **Fight BSL Yahoo group:** Go to groups.yahoo.com and search for “Fight BSL”



3. Contact Your Local Politicians

Calls, letters and e-mails from voters influence elected officials. Here are some specific actions you can take:

- Call the city or county clerk or the League of Women Voters (www.lww.org) to request contact information for your city and county officials. Contact information for elected officials may also be available on your city's website. Then call your elected officials and POLITELY voice your opposition to the law or proposed measure.
- Make copies of the city council contact list. Distribute a flyer containing information about the proposed measure and the contact information of the local officials at your veterinarian's office, dog training classes, feed stores, pet stores and groomers.
- Ask your local humane society to oppose the measure. Ask your veterinarian to speak out and make calls. It is extremely important to get local veterinarians to testify at hearings on the proposed legislation. Their expertise carries great weight with officials.
- Send your own personal letter opposing breed discrimination and breed-specific legislation to the appropriate elected government officials, the police chief and the city attorney. If your city government also has a city manager who makes policy recommendations to the city council, contact him or her about the issue. Send a personal polite e-mail, too.
- Send letters discussing the proposed legislation to the editors of local newspapers in order to spread the word about the issue and educate other residents.
- You can also attend city council and county

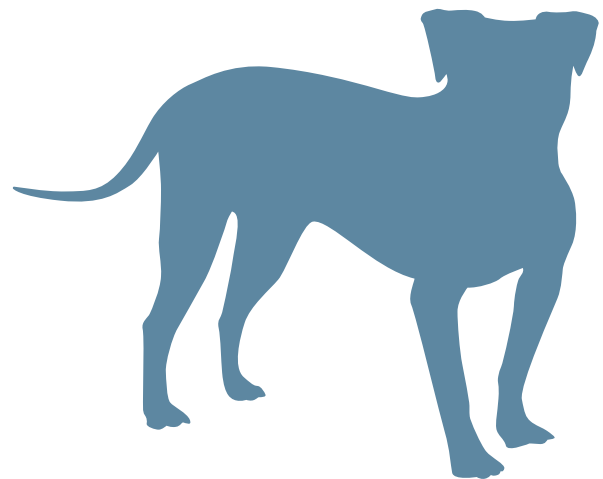
board meetings and testify. As the meetings get closer, or the vote is coming up, purchase small ads in the local newspaper or distribute flyers to help get fellow citizens to show support and attend the meetings.

- At the meetings, wear t-shirts or buttons showing that you oppose canine profiling. (By the way, it's not a good idea to bring dogs to these meetings unless they are certified therapy dogs.)
- Provide city council members with the information they will need to make an informed decision. Read the articles listed below and use the information contained in them in your appeal to lawmakers. You can also give these articles directly to city officials or the media.

[All Bark and Fiscal Bite: Are Breed-Discriminatory Laws Effective?](#) by Ledy VanKavage

[Fiscal Bite & Breed Discrimination: Utilizing Scientific Advances & Economic Tools in Lobbying](#) by Ledy VanKavage and John Dunham

[The Need for a Canine Innocence Project](#) by Ledy VanKavage



- At the meetings, be sure to talk about how much it would cost your city to enact a breed-discriminatory or breed-specific law. You can calculate the cost using Best Friends' Fiscal Impact Calculator at www.guerrillaeconomics.biz/bestfriends.
- You can also mention that if your city passes a breed-discriminatory provision, the burden of proof is on the city to prove that the dog is of a certain breed. Many city attorneys and police chiefs haven't kept up with the science of tracing a dog's heritage. They should know that it's expensive — usually \$120 to \$160 per dog — to run DNA tests on all the mixed-breed dogs in town. For information on ordering a canine DNA test, visit www.wisdompanel.com.
- Finally, to further inform city officials, you might want to send the city attorney a copy of the American Bar Association book *A Lawyer's Guide to Dangerous Dog Laws*, which recommends against breed discrimination. It is available at www.abanet.org. Click on the Web Store and search for "dangerous dog laws."

Be Courteous and Polite

Keep in mind that community leaders can be quickly turned off by a large volume of angry calls from people, especially if they are not residents of your community. All of your public calls to action should encourage activity by local residents and should be carried out in a respectful and polite manner.

Visual Identification of Breeds

According to Dr. Victoria Voith, visual identification, even by professionals, is often wrong. In a recent study, Dr. Voith found that, in 87.5 percent of adopted dogs, breeds identified by DNA analyses were not the breeds stated by the adoption agencies. Animal shelter workers were right in guessing the heritage of a mixed-breed dog only 12.5 percent of the time. Because of the inaccuracy of visual breed identification, Voith rightly questioned current public and private policies based on dog breeds. For more, go to the National Canine Research Council website and read Dr. Voith's study, called *A Comparison of Visual and DNA Identifications of Breeds*. nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/dog-bites/dog-bite-studies



4. Get Social

Go on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and Craig's List and ask folks to help save our pets. You can also start a blog or go on your city newspaper's blog and leave comments. Tell people about Pit Bull Positive, a social networking site specific to pit bulls: pitbullpositive.ning.com.

5. Update Wikipedia

Go to your community's Wikipedia website and edit it, mentioning that the town is now considering breed-discriminatory legislation to warn dog lovers who may be thinking about moving to your community.

6. Use Economic Pressure

Contact the town's chamber of commerce or tourism council, and ask people from the surrounding communities to also contact these groups and businesses. Tell them you're going to boycott businesses in the town if the measure passes.

To figure out how much it will cost your city to enforce the breed-discriminatory ordinance, go to Best Friends' Fiscal Impact Calculator at www.guerrillaeconomics.biz/bestfriends. Share this information with your local dog-loving neighbors, friends and family.

7. Contact Local Media

Contact the town's chamber of commerce
Call and e-mail newspapers, local television stations, and local radio shows. Ask them

to talk to you or Best Friends attorney Ledy VanKavage, Esq. (ledyv@bestfriends.org) about why breed-discriminatory laws don't work. If they come to interview you and you have a pit-bull-type dog, make sure the dog is well-behaved and not on a chain. Dress the dog up in a bandana or a frilly, silly collar for the interview.

During the interview, mention that it is extremely expensive to enforce these laws, and describe how they interfere with the rights of responsible dog owners. Responsible owners with good dogs would be forced to give up their best friend or move out of the community.

Tell the interviewer that all the following major organizations oppose breed discrimination:

- Best Friends Animal Society
- National Animal Control Association
- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
- Centers for Disease Control
- Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
- American Humane Association
- American Veterinary Medical Association

If the media need additional background information on the topic, you can refer them to any of the resources listed throughout this action kit.

Why Breed Discrimination Doesn't Work

Below is a list of basic reasons why breed discrimination is an ineffective policy. Feel free to use any of this information in your personal letters and phone calls, as well as in letters to the editor or media interviews.



- It is often difficult, even for experts, to determine the breed of a dog, particularly when considering mixed-breed dogs. We challenge you to “Find the Pit Bull” (courtesy of Pit Bull Rescue Central). www.pitbullsontheweb.com/petbull/findpit.html
- Many dogs are misidentified and consequently destroyed simply because of their appearance. Now try to identify a mixed-breed dog. network.bestfriends.org/groups/pitbulls/media/p/134048/download.aspx
- Breed-discriminatory laws cause unintended hardship to responsible owners of friendly dogs who happen to fall within the regulated breed category.
- Breed-discriminatory laws compromise public safety by requiring officers to enforce regulation on dogs who may or may not be

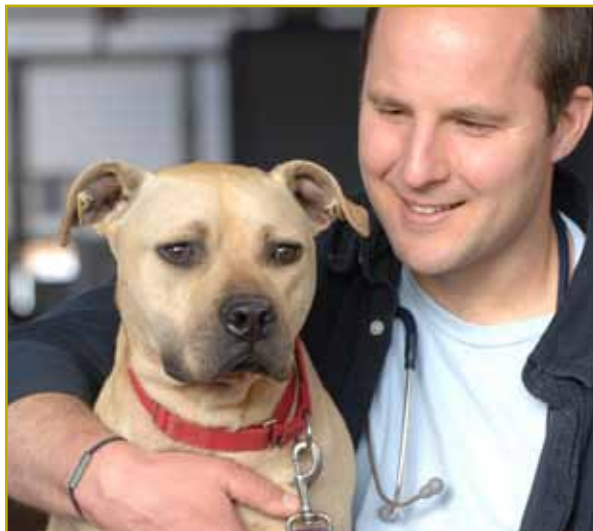
dangerous, instead of investing resources into proven, effective tactics that make the community safer.

- A dog is an individual, with his or her own unique personality. A dog should be judged on temperament and not appearance.
- Studies of pre- and post-breed-ban dog-bite rates in the United Kingdom and Spain concluded that their breed-discriminatory laws had no effect whatsoever on reducing dog bites.
- Italy recently revoked its breed restrictions, stating that the ban had no scientific justification. For details, read this story on the Best Friends Network. network.bestfriends.org/campaigns/pitbulls/news.aspx?plD=10615
- Calgary, Canada, has the lowest dog-bite rates in 25 years, without enacting breed discrimination. For details, read this story on the Best Friends Network. network.bestfriends.org/campaigns/pitbulls/news.aspx?plD=11114
- The police and animal control will lose the public's trust by seizing and killing pets simply because of their appearance. Read this article by Best Friends' Ledy VanKavage. animals.change.org/blog/view/the_need_for_a_canine_innocence_project

What Does Work

To have safe, humane communities, Best Friends encourages you to urge government officials to focus on reckless owners instead of punishing responsible owners of friendly, well-behaved dogs. Ordinances should be passed that hold people responsible for the behavior of their pets, no matter what the breed. A humane, effective ordinance might include regulations that:

- Encourage residents to spay or neuter their pets (and charge higher license fees for unaltered animals)
- Provide adequate due process provisions for dog owners through breed-neutral dangerous dog laws
- Restrict tethering
- Prevent reckless owners from having dogs



Dogs Matter!

If you lose round 1 and a breed-discriminatory law passes, don't give up! Take a deep breath and then:

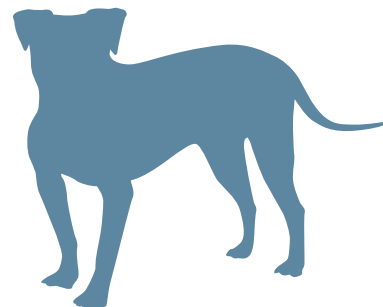
- Intensify your efforts and phone calls to elected officials.
- Keep going to city council meetings and speaking out against breed discrimination.
- If all else fails, run for public office or help animal-friendly candidates win.

For more on how to become politically active for animals, read these books:

- *Get Political for Animals and Win the Laws They Need* by Julie Lewin
- *Rules for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky

When you do win, publish an ad in local newspapers thanking your elected officials.

Last, but not least, tell your friends at Best Friends about what worked in your campaign and what did not so we can help spread the word and give support to dog lovers in other cities across the country.



THANK YOU FOR TAKING ACTION FOR ANIMALS!

Success in Elgin, Illinois

Attention Elgin Taxpayers & Pet Lovers!

The Elgin City Council is considering passing a breed-discriminatory ordinance that could potentially cause undue hardship to responsible taxpaying citizens.

If the ordinance passes, any mixed-breed dog that resembles a "pit bull," living with a responsible family that is financially unable to comply with onerous restrictions could be seized and killed. The ordinance will also cost taxpayers thousands of dollars in litigation and DNA testing to determine if a dog is a "pit bull."

To see what these restrictions might cost Elgin Taxpayers to enact and enforce visit: <http://www.guerrillaeconomics.biz/bestfriends/>

This is America: Responsible dog owners should be allowed to have any breed of dog they choose. An ordinance that truly increases public safety would target reckless owners and prevent them from owning any dog.

Please call these officials who voted for the ordinance and ask them to strike the canine-profiling sections.

Thank you for speaking out for Elgin's pets.

Please contact the City of Elgin at 847-931-5590 and ask the following city councilmen to oppose breed discrimination:

Mayor Ed Schock
355 Jefferson Ave, Elgin, IL 60120

Councilman Bob Gilliam
50 S. Grove Ave, Elgin, IL 60120

Councilman John Prigge
821 Bellevue Ave, Elgin, IL 60120

Councilman Mike Warren
1600 Lin Lor Ln, Elgin, IL 60123



Best Friends
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The citizens of Elgin, Illinois, successfully fought breed-specific language in a local animal ordinance. Above is the call to action and at right is the thank-you notice to the mayor and city council. [Click here](#) to read an editorial by Steve Dale posted on Chicago Now.

A Special Thanks

Elgin's responsible dog owners are cheering the council's decision to remove the breed specific language from the new animal ordinance.

The responsible dog owning citizens of Elgin united and made a stance. Thank you Mayor and City Council for listening and pursuing an animal ordinance that holds people accountable for the behavior and care of their dogs.

Special thanks goes to Councilmen David Kaptain, Richard Dunne, and John Steffen. for their sound judgment.



Taysia the service dog will continue to visit her friends in nursing homes and hospitals