

Pasadena Now, Opinion: Councilman Steve Madison Wants To Ban My Dogs, 1/16/14

We all want safe communities for everyone--those that we love, those that we know, those that we don't know. Safety is of the utmost importance to anyone that has a genuine care for people and for animals alike. With that being said, Pasadena City Councilman Steve Madison wants to ban my dogs. He'd likely be just as happy if they were dead, and all based around the way that they look. California state law prohibits this, but the Pasadena City Council, knowing Madison's crystal clear intent for these dogs, still voted with him to craft a future breed-discriminatory law that would mandate that all dogs they deem to be Pit Bulls be spayed and neutered. Councilwoman Jacque Robinson was the only dissenting vote. This came a month after they tabled a proposal for the same law in relation to all dogs. To coincide with their desire for this legislation, they've also given the Mayor permission to start contacting California legislators about the possibility of overturning state law, which currently prohibits the banning of certain types of dogs by breed.

You may think, what's wrong with spay and neuter? I'd say nothing. My own dogs are all sterilized. The problem is that this Councilman is on a crusade to vilify Pit Bulls and eliminate them from his city. He has admitted as much, and on numerous different occasions. Any breed-specific law that is put forth is done so in conjunction with the mass demonization of whatever type of dog they are targeting. Pit Bulls take the brunt of this from around the country. The unjust stereotypes perpetuated by this action surely results in their further abandonment and mistreatment, and the sheer existence of such ideas imply that they are different from other dogs. This couldn't be further from the truth. Millions of them exist in the United States, 99.9% of which have never harmed anyone.

Mandatory serialization of Pit Bulls, or of any dog, does not reduce attacks on people or pets. What does is the enforcement of actual laws (many times already existing but rarely enforced) that focus on the individual behavior of both the animal itself, and more importantly, its owner. Enforcing leash laws, the anti-chaining law, and the "dangerous dog" law would go a long way in addressing issues that could possibly manifest into something more severe. Mandating the sterilization of any dog caught running loose would also be a worthy idea. These are all concepts that are based around responsibility. Human fatalities by dog are always preceded by an utter lack thereof.

Roaming dogs, chained and tethered yard dogs, and the non-supervision of children are consistently the common denominators in almost every single dog-related fatality that you can pull up from any random calendar year. These are dynamics that allow any individual dog, with whatever level of bad temperament, to act freely and without any level of supervision. To dismiss focus on this is to do a massive disservice to both your community and all of the law-abiding dog owners (of all breeds and types) in Pasadena, and further, across the country. I'd argue that from a "public safety" standpoint the covering up of that information, the ignoring of it (both the information and the reckless owners themselves), is the biggest crime of all.

The desire to criminalize millions of completely innocent dogs, or groups of anything else, who have been generically and unfairly deemed to universally fit some negative connotation as a whole is fundamentally wrong on every level. People are individuals, and so are dogs. If you treat them in the opposite ways then you not only discriminate wildly but also resoundingly fail to even attempt to address the problems associated with the individual incidents or "attacks" that have jump-started these debates in the first place.

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