

Dear Mayor Bogaard,

I appreciate you taking the time to respond to my correspondence. I sincerely hope that you will review at least some of the materials that have been presented to you. I understand that the Pasadena City Council is currently considering an ordinance that would require sterilization of "pit bull" type dogs -- for now. I am not opposed to spaying and neutering of animals, but mandatory spay/neuter ordinances are not an effective means of accomplishing the goal of reducing homeless animals in our communities. Such an ordinance is fraught with problems, not the least of which is enforcement. Who will enforce the ordinance? And how? The City of Los Angeles has had a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance in effect for several years and it has done nothing to reduce the number of animals impounded at its facilities. See attached results of the Spay/Neuter ordinance for the City of Los Angeles.

Although the City of Pasadena is currently discussing imposition of a breed specific spay/neuter ordinance, it is clear that some members of the Pasadena City Council do not intend to stop at a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance for "pit bulls". The Council has already voted to authorize you to contact legislators in Sacramento to attempt to repeal California Food and Agricultural Code Section 31683, commonly known as an anti-BSL statute. Clearly the breed specific spay/neuter ordinance is a precursor to an outright ban, at least for some on the Pasadena City Council.

What is also clear is that the rhetoric in the City Council discussions is not focused on reducing shelter intake numbers or reducing the populations of homeless animals. It is focused on vilification of a particular type of dog that has been deemed vicious or dangerous simply by virtue of its appearance. That attitude stems from an irrational fear borne of ignorance. The information that is now being presented to support a breed specific spay/neuter ordinance is precisely the same language that has been used to support breed bans.

There is a substantial body of research by well-respected individuals and institutions that contradicts the myths and outright fabrications about "pit bulls". The information is there for the taking. In fact I have supplied you with just a sampling of such information. On the other hand, the information that has been provided to the Pasadena City Council in support of vilifying or banning "pit bulls", specifically that from www.dogsbite.org, is the research equivalent of junk science. No legitimate statistician or researcher would get his/her "facts" from news reports, especially on this topic where media accounts are so incomplete and inaccurate.

If the interest is truly in public safety, there are much more effective means of accomplishing that. For example, enforcement of existing laws that are directly related to reducing dog related incidents, e.g., leash laws. It is far easier to determine whether a dog is on a leash than to determine its reproductive capabilities. Dogs on leash and under their owners' control are far less dangerous than those running at large, regardless of breed. Enforcement of existing laws has the added benefit of generating revenue for the City. There is no downside.

Enforcement of a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance is virtually impossible and very costly. In addition to just the routine monitoring of the reproductive status of dogs in the city, there will likely be litigation costs to challenge any such ordinance. That money would be far better spent on educating animal owners on the importance of reducing animal populations as well as responsible pet management. By education, I do not mean passive programs whereby brochures are distributed at local animal control agencies. I mean actively involving the community in seminars on all aspects of dog ownership and behavior.

I would be very happy to provide education to animal owners, but I will not support any kind of legislation that singles out dogs based on breed and/or appearance as that is nothing more than bigotry and the canine equivalent of racial profiling.

Sincerely,

Marla Tauscher, Attorney at law