

STEPS TO PASSING A LOCAL ORDINANCE: BANNING EXOTIC ANIMAL ACTS

Timing Can Help

- Use incidents, such as a recent elephant rampage, as a catalyst for change.

Set Your Goal

- Ask for a ban (see enclosed models).
- Be firm about your goals—if they think you will settle for less, then that is what you'll get!
- If a prohibition is ruled out, then compromise—but point out to officials the cost involved (e.g., inspections, liability, etc.).

Do Your Homework on the Issue

- Research the issue.
- Find out what relevant laws are currently on the books from the town or city clerks' offices.
- Look for local connections, such as a recent animal escape or attack.
- Emphasize how the ban benefits the community (safety, etc.).
- Prepare brief factsheets on the issue and the proposed ordinance for legislators and media.

Solicit Support From Local Cruelty Investigators

- Call your local humane society or the city clerk to determine who handles cruelty complaints.
- Explain why the ban is a good idea and how important their support would be.
- It is important to include this group of people in your efforts as their support may be persuasive with government officials.

Write a Letter to the Editor

- This is an easy, effective, and free means of communicating your message to the general public.
- Tell people what they can do (e.g., call their legislator, etc.).
- Be brief and to the point.

Do Your Homework on the Legislators

- Call your local office of the League of Women Voters or the county clerk's office for legislators' names and districts.
- Check past voting records on animal issues.
- Check with local humane societies and ask for support.
- Find supporters in each district—legislators will be most responsive to their own constituents.
- Get to know legislators' aides, staff, and secretaries.
- Determine where you stand the best chance for change (city vs. county).

Visit Your Legislators

- Select a primary spokesperson who knows the issues and make an appointment.
- Explain what impact the ordinance would have on their constituents.
- Leave fliers and factsheets but not thick packets.
- Allow time for questions.
- Ask for support for the proposed ordinance.
- Thank the legislator and any office personnel whom you interact with.

Call Your Legislators

- Make calls short and to the point.
- Be well informed.
- Be polite.
- If the legislator is unavailable, speak with an aide or other staff member—they can be useful contacts.

Write to Your Legislators

- Write short, polite letters in your own words, preferably handwritten if your handwriting is legible.
- Postcards, petitions, and form letters are the least effective—use only as a supplement to other correspondence to show support.

Know the Local Legislative Process

- Contact city or county council offices for information on the legislative process.
- Ask council clerks for the schedule of open council meetings.
- Attend at least one meeting to see how the system works.

Attend City/County Council Meetings

- Contact council offices for procedures to getting on the meeting agenda.
- Prepare for the meeting ahead of time.
- Dress professionally.
- Be brief and to the point.
- Let council members know how the ordinance will affect their constituents.
- Show that their constituents support the legislation (petitions).
- Use the opportunity to meet the legislators and their supporters.
- Be a presence at meetings, even if you are not on the agenda.

Know What to Do

Do:

- make sure that the legislators know how the bill will affect their constituents
- emphasize how the ban benefits the community
- be specific and know your facts
- be direct and positive
- provide a brief, clearly written summary of your position
- talk to legislators in person whenever possible
- present a united front
- know what issues the legislators are working on and help when you can
- write a personal thank you after every visit or supportive action by a legislator
- be cooperative

Know What Not to Do

Do not:

- be argumentative or hostile
- interrupt when they are busy or in a hurry
- press for a commitment on the first visit
- hesitate to admit that you do not know everything, but let them know that you will find out
- make threats
- be overly emotional