



February 10, 2012

Dan Crippen, Executive Director
National Governors Association
Hall of the States, 444 N. Capitol St., Ste. 267
Washington, DC 20001-1512

Dear Mr. Crippen:

We hope this finds you well. Last year, I contacted then–National Governors Association (NGA) Executive Director Raymond Scheppach about the estimated 6 to 8 million dogs and cats who are relinquished to animal shelters across the U.S. annually, but unfortunately, I did not receive a response. The animal overpopulation and homelessness crisis is an urgent topic affecting every state budget and one that we hope you will consider discussing at the NGA's meeting later this month. **We hope you will acknowledge and consider our letter and offer a thoughtful response.** We again respectfully ask that *the NGA use its influence to ensure strong action in 2012 to end animal homelessness.*

No community is a stranger to the cost and consequences of animal overpopulation and homelessness. Please consider the following information:

- Estimated annual taxpayer cost to take in, house, put to death, and dispose of unwanted dogs, cats, and other animals in the U.S.: \$2 billion
- Estimated average cost of intake, care, and disposition per sheltered animal: roughly \$211
- Estimated number of Americans bitten by dogs annually: 4.7 million
- According to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, unsterilized dogs are 2.6 times likelier to bite than dogs who have been sterilized.
- Statements such as "Spayed or neutered dogs are less likely to bite" from the [United States Postal Service](#) and other partners of [2011 Dog Bite Prevention Week](#) (including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons, the American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery, and Prevent the Bite) are in sync with a recommendation in the American Veterinary Medical Association's [Dog Bite Prevention Brochure](#), which advises: "Neuter your pet."

According to the December 1, 2010, "News and Numbers" from the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#), the number of people

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

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- PETA Foundation (U.K.)
- PETA Asia-Pacific
- PETA India
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands

admitted to the hospital because of dog bites **increased** by 86 percent—from 5,100 to 9,500 hospital stays—between 1993 and 2008. In 2008, treating patients admitted for dog bites cost hospitals an average of \$18,200 per patient and \$54 million overall. The NGA can help slow the increase in these costs and prevent pain and suffering for millions of Americans each year.

High intake and euthanasia rates, significant animal control costs, the threat that dangerous dogs pose to communities, roaming animals who overturn trash, cats who multiply and damage public and private property, and complaints of neglect and cruelty pinpoint the problems with having large numbers of unwanted animals that the community and government must deal with.

The *good news* is that there is a practical, fiscally sensible solution to this epidemic, and it lies in prevention—getting *in front* of the problem instead of trying to clean it up (which has proved to be ineffective for decades). Requiring that dogs and cats be sterilized unless their owners purchase an annual breeding permit—the cost of which funds low-cost spay/neuter services—will save animals' lives *and* taxpayer dollars. Purposely bred puppies usually sell for several hundred dollars each. A permit fee is a reasonable and small price to pay to breed animals when taxpayers fund the capture, housing, and disposition of others.

We respectfully urge the NGA to address animal homelessness and its inherent drain on the budget by including spay/neuter laws in the programs promoted by the NGA Center for Best Practices and implementing a policy position supporting legislative measures to address the animal overpopulation crisis. We can provide lawmakers with sample laws and language that works as well as link states with communities that have already instituted effective spay and neuter laws. **We look forward to hearing from your office soon.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daphna Nachminovitch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Daphna Nachminovitch, Vice President
Cruelty Investigations Department

cc: The Honorable Chris Gregoire, Chair
The Honorable Dave Heineman, Vice Chair