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Subject: Please insert in Council File 10-0982; Increasing Cats/Dogs Owned

Please insert in Council file 10-0982. This is a rebuttal of Phyllis Daughtery's protest to this legislation

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August 9, 2010

Councilmember Bill
Rosendahl and
Councilmember Paul
Koretz Los Angeles City
Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles CA 90012

RE: CF No.10-0982 INCREASING CATS/DOGS OWNED

Phyllis Daugherty submitted a protest on July 2. This is a response.

Her logic is faulty and based on specious creations of worst case scenarios. Her opinions certainly do not represent that of the LA animal community as a whole, nor the residents of Los Angeles. Let us examine her protest:

“Animal Issues Movement hereby submits opposition to any attempt to increase the current dog limits per residential property in the City of L.A. The City of Los Angeles wisely allows only three (3) dogs. Almost every jurisdiction in the country allows only this number or less.”

Here Phyllis provides no proof that almost every jurisdiction in the County limits dogs to 3. If we take a look at the City of San Diego, the second largest city in Southern California, they have a limit of 6 dogs, and no limit on cats. Cats are unregulated.

AND, the San Diego County Animal Control, the S.D. Humane Society, and six other participating shelters report a lower euthanasia rate than LA City or LA County shelter systems.

“IMAGINE LIVING NEXT DOOR TO FIVE (5) PIT BULLS, OR ANY OTHER ANIMAL-AGGRESSIVE BREED, AND HAVING THEM JUMP OVER FENCES INTO

YOUR YARD TO KILL YOUR PETS OR ESCAPING THROUGH GATES INTO YOUR COMMUNITY. FURTHER IMAGINE HAVING FIVE (5) PIT BULLS—OR ANY OTHER BREED OF LARGE or NOISY DOG (even Chihuahuas can create tremendous noise in multiples)—on EVERY PROPERTY IN A BLOCK AND ON BOTH SIDES OF THE STREET. As we know, barking is contagious and the cacophony of barks would make life for the community one of constant, uncontrollable noise.”

Here, Phyllis raising a worst case scenario. She assumes that if this law is passed, suddenly every block will have multiple households with barking pitbulls or other large, dangerous dogs that jump into your yard to kill your pets. This is an absurd conclusion: Suddenly, if you allow 2 extra dogs per household, there will be constant and uncontrolled barking with many pitbulls now roaming the street killing pets and endangering children. This is the worst form of paranoid and biased thinking.

“Also, many of the most popular dog breeds today cannot be safely kept in multiples because of territoriality or animal-aggression. Imagine the lives of cats that might be kept in the same property or on adjacent properties.”

Again, this is Phyllis’s fear mongering, worst case scenario thinking. If territoriality is a problem of multiples, it would be true for a 3 dog limit as well as an increased 5 dog limit. As for cats, would more cats be killed by 5 dogs on a property versus 3 if any of the dogs are “cat killers?”

Her arguments turn on her assumption that these dogs will get loose and terrorize the neighborhood. However, allowing dogs to roam loose is illegal already, whether you have 1 or 5. So too is noisy barking. She has provided no proof that there will be a radical increase in noise or danger to the community.

- Increasing dog limits has been defeated soundly several times in the past by a large contingent of homeowners’ associations, apartment associations, and realtors, who would again unite to oppose it.
- It also was opposed by the Zoning Dept. because of the dangers, noise and enforcement problems it would create and the potential deterioration of residential neighborhoods.

Again, this is just her statement without proof. I assume there are many pet owners who will support an increased limit to 5 dogs.

“If the Council wishes to have LA Animal Services explore the feasibility of developing a program for microchipping and registering up to five (5) SPAYED/NEUTERED indoor-only cats, that should be presented to them for study of the impact on the Department and the increased staffing required to maintain records and perform inspections if necessary. It is still highly unlikely this will make a substantial increase in adult cat adoptions. And there is the possibility that it will create an even greater market for kittens—most of which will not be altered.”

The City of San Diego does not regulate cats. The County of San Diego allows unlimited indoor cats. Santa Monica allows unlimited indoor cats. Many other municipalities throughout California either have no limit on cats, indoors or out, or have a much higher limit than 3. I believe LA County allows 6.

Currently it is the law for all cats and dogs to be spay/neutered with exceptions. Therefore to state that allowing a few extra cats in a household will result in higher impounds, kittens and euthanasia is purely speculative.

“Although undoubtedly this motion were well-intended, in reality adding more animals to the residential population at this time when Animal Services is reducing its staffing will have a diametrically opposite effect than intended.”

Again, this is her conclusion with no proof added at any point to now. She just says bad things will happen and provides worst case scenarios.

“THE REASON ANIMAL OWNERS ABANDON OR RELINQUISH ANIMALS IS BECAUSE OF POOR JUDGMENT IN THE COST, CARE OR RESPONSIBILITY OF PET OWNERSHIP. TO BELIEVE THAT ALLOWING THEM TO HAVE MORE ANIMALS WILL REDUCE THE PROBLEM IS OBVIOUSLY A FALSE PREMISE. Those who can least afford animals are the ones most likely to attain more than they can safely and financially handle. Many responsible owners already slightly exceed the current animal limits (3 dogs/3 cats) and LA Animal Services does not investigate unless there is a complaint.”

Again, Phyllis is speculating without providing any proof. The reasons people turn animal into the shelters are many: the house was foreclosed on, and the place they are moving to does not take animals; the apartment moved from allowed animals, but the new place doesn't. These are the two greatest current reasons for animals being relinquished to shelters. Also, several thousand relinquish animals because they are mortally ill or injured, and they take them to the shelters to be euthanized. This is the third largest category.

“To allow up to ten (10) animals per residence would merely encourage hoarding and result in more animals suffering, dying in horrific conditions or being ultimate impounded in poor condition. This proposal would allow ten (10) total dogs and/or cats to be maintained per single residential lot. Can you imagine living next door to the noise, waste, odor, fighting/killing and confusion of ten animals in one yard and in EACH yard?”

Again, Phyllis is both speculating and also creating a worst case scenario. There is no research that raising the pet limit results in more hoarding. In fact, in a document I am submitting separately, neither the City or County of San Diego, with no cat limit and a six dog limit, suffer from a major hoarder problem. The same holds true for Santa Monica, that had 3 hoarder busts in a ten year period. Hoarding is a psychological problem and the incidence of this psychological problem will not increase just because the pet limit is raised.

“Some residents “take in/rescue” animals from the streets and are given stray and unwanted animals, which they believe they cannot refuse. They often become “hoarders” and lose the ability to care for the animals and do not spay/neuter nor provide appropriate medical care because of the costs. Increasing the limit numbers enables “collecting” animals and encourages them to not relinquish someone's lost pet to the shelter where it can be reclaimed by the owner. It also subjects animals to months—or even years—of living in squalor, dehydration and malnutrition, and living in their own waste because the hoarder is either afraid to place it in trash bins which might reveal the number of animals or does not have the time to clean.”

Again, Phyllis appears to fear of everything bad happening if the dog and cat limit is raised, and that there will be a huge increase in hoarding. She refuses to look at the positive impact of having more legal openings for cats and dogs to be adopted.

“Animal control officers have historically **NOT** punished nor harassed individuals in regard to the number of **well-maintained** animals they keep as pets, **UNLESS** there are complaints by neighbors, in which case the issue must be addressed regardless of zoning or legal limits.”

Here we have a critical problem she does not address. Often Animal Services is pulled into neighborhood disputes by neighbors making false complaints about a resident, or from an ex spouse or live-in girlfriend/boyfriend, too much barking, unhealthy conditions, property overrun by cats, etc. Then Animal Services investigates and finds the allegations to be untrue. This is a waste of manpower and time. **IT HAPPENED TO ME, TWICE**, and because LAAS refuses to give out info as to whole the complainant was, I still don't know who made the complaints, or even whether it came from within LAAS itself.

However, many times an officer's investigation will reveal a resident with 5, 6 or even 10 cats, (**NOT IN MY CASE**) well cared for in a clean house. The living conditions are perfect, but the officer has to choose whether to overlook the pet limit law, or give the resident a Notice to Comply, to reduce the number of cats or dogs. This results in the need for more wasted resources for followup.

There are many people that have more than the pet limit already. Raising the limits will “decriminalize” these households.

“WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM INCREASED ANIMAL LIMITS?”

1. **BREEDERS** who usually keep a number of breeding adults and a large number of puppies/kittens on the premises. This would allow them to increase their non-taxpaying business in a residential zone.
2. **DOG FIGHTERS** who keep numerous pit bulls chained on their properties for fighting and breeding purposes. (Note: Often the animal limit is the **ONLY** way to gain entry to a property to inspect and curtail this activity.)”

This is a bizarre conclusion. The new law would allow an additional 2 cats and an additional 2 dogs, but Phyllis now talks about the law aiding breeders and dog fighters to keep a large number of animals on the premises. This is faulty logic of the most bizarre sort.

Below are some of her more outrageous speculative conclusions based on her assumption of worst case scenario:

She states the following would be negatively impacted by the pet limit increase of two cats and two dogs:

Property owners who might have neighbors with a large amount of animals that create a nuisance or health/safety risk and negatively impact the quality of live and property values in the community.

Again, we are talking about raising the limit from 3 cats and three dogs, to 5 cats and 5 dogs. She magnifies that apparently in thousands of nuisance animals throughout the city. This is just extremely biased, paranoid logic.

“The animals of this City would not benefit from being adopted by people who have no idea how to control a "pack" of dogs (a mentality that occurs in dogs in multiples.)”

Here we go again. Five dogs become a pack of dogs that are uncontrollable, while three is fine.

I would note that barking dogs are illegal already, whether you have three or five.

Police officers who are frequently forced to shoot animals in order to enter properties to assist humans or conduct investigations. (The greater the number of dogs, the more danger to the community and to law-enforcement.)

She offers no evidence other than her constant worst case scenario speculations that there will be a major increase in police shooting dogs, pack behaviors of 5 dogs wandering the streets killing cats and small children. She merely demonstrates her fear. She cites no evidence that police officers are "frequently forced to shoot animals." In fact, this is quite rare. We have animal control field officers that deal with these situations non-lethally. How often do police shoot dogs or cats in LA per year? Ten times? A hundred times? How will that number increase if some people get an extra dog or two? She provides no evidence. She provides only fear mongering.

LA Animal Services, which would receive far more calls for dog bites and injuries from dog/cat fights in homes.

Also, the children who would no longer be able to walk or play on the streets and the pets who could no longer be safely taken for a walk without threat of attack.

This is fear mongering of the worst sort.

If the law allows two extra dogs per household, there will be "far more calls for dog bites," and children would no longer be able to play on the streets? Give me a break. This woman has no sense of proportion and offers no proof for her worst case assumptions.