



# Perspectives

*The Delegates' Newsletter*

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# Why Does HSUS Have Credibility in Legislatures and Governments?

*RODNEY L. RUSSELL* , Florida Association of Kennel Clubs,  
*invited by SYLVIA ARROWOOD*, Charleston Kennel Club

## Legislation

The Humane Society of the United States. Its name alone gives it credibility. It sounds “establishment”, “conventional”, “stable”, even “staid.” With that name, it must be the nationwide umbrella organization for all of the local humane societies throughout the country, right? Man-on-the-street polls have shown that up to 94% of Americans think HSUS runs our nation’s local animal shelters.

### Just Demonizing HSUS Isn’t Enough

Its outright deception is frustrating, and so most of our focus has been on the hypocrisy of its name and its stated mission: “The HSUS is the nation’s largest animal protection organization. The HSUS is a mainstream voice for animals, with active programs in companion animals, wildlife and habitat protection, animals in research, and farm animals. Our mission is to celebrate animals and confront cruelty.”

We probably learned early and quickly that HSUS seeks to destroy purebred dog breeding and the ownership of companion animals, and that it needs to be opposed and stopped.

Our knee-jerk approach often has been to demonize HSUS, to attack its fund-raising ploys, and to show where its money really goes.

And yet, we wonder why what we have learned so easily about HSUS is not at all obvious to so many others, particularly state and local legislators, legislative staff, and government employees in general. Why do these bureaucrats ignore us and continue to pay attention to what HSUS says? Why do these legislators readily accept HSUS’s advice and blindly file the legislative bills which HSUS’s lobbyists put in their hands?

Perhaps an initial rationale for HSUS’s high favorability ratings with legislators would be all of the campaign money that its political action committee (PAC) throws at elected officials. And, perhaps,

HSUS’s campaign contributions do partially explain the legislators’ willingness to so often sponsor its outrageous bills seeking to harshly regulate – and eventually to eliminate – dog breeding and pet owning. It is easy to assume that any legislator who puts his name on an HSUS bill is on the take and has his pockets lined with HSUS PAC money.

### HSUS’s Grassroots Programs and Regional Lobbyists are Effective

There is a lot more to HSUS than its deceptive mission and buying legislators. HSUS has full-time regional lobbyists and grassroots educational and training programs which are highly valued by state and local officials.

Did you know that HSUS is the primary nationwide provider of professional development and educational training for county and municipal animal shelter staff and animal control officers? One of its stated goals is “to support you with the very latest in training and skills enhancement whether you are in the advocacy, law enforcement, or animal care and control community.”

Did you know that HSUS has a disaster services program that offers training courses and planning assistance to animal disaster responders throughout the United States? HSUS puts on numerous regional three-day workshops and has on-line Internet courses.

In Florida, state and local animal control and disaster response agencies rely heavily upon information created by HSUS. As an example, go to this webpage – <http://www.flsart.org/pdf/AVMF/Disaster%20Preparedness%20Pet%20Brochure.pdf> – to see a slick, multi-colored HSUS brochure, “Disaster Preparedness for Pets”, which the Florida State Agricultural Response Team distributes to explain the state’s disaster preparedness program for pets.

In addition, HSUS has regional representatives who serve both as lobbyists to

state, county, and local governments, as well as educators at government-sponsored animal control and disaster seminars and workshops. In Florida, the “go to” expert for legislators is not anyone associated with AKC or the Florida Association of Kennel Clubs; it is HSUS’s eastern regional representative, with over 20 years of HSUS experience and whose office, unfortunately, happens to be located in Florida’s capital city, Tallahassee.

As long as HSUS is the primary source for training government animal control officers and disaster response teams, and as long as HSUS lobbyists are on the scene at the state and local levels, reminding the bureaucrats of the infinite knowledge only HSUS could possibly have about animal control and shelters, then HSUS will continue to have the credibility it needs to convince the legislators to file its anti-breeder, anti-pet bills. Our verbal and written efforts to vilify HSUS will fall, largely, upon deaf ears.

### HSUS’s Legislative Bills Will Be Back Again

During the past two years’ state legislative sessions in Florida, all we could do was react to the HSUS bills already filed, and then to try to convince the legislators of how unnecessary, unreasonable, and unconstitutional those bills would be if passed into law. We flooded the legislators’ fax machines, voice mail boxes, and email boxes, and we packed the committee hearing rooms.

Fortunately, we were successful in 2009 and again this year; not one of HSUS’s lunatic bills was passed. But that success might not have had anything to do with our efforts, since the overriding focus of the Florida legislature’s attention was on desperately trying to balance the state’s budget.

HSUS will be back again, year after year, in nearly every state and in many

counties and cities, and the legislators and bureaucrats will continue to pay attention to what HSUS has to say, because it will continue to have remarkable credibility.

If we are going to overcome that credibility, we are going to have to meet HSUS head-on at the grassroots

level. AKC needs to go regional and start competing with HSUS in the education and training of state and local animal control and disaster response professionals. If AKC truly is “the dog’s champion,” then it cannot afford to just sit at its national headquarters and dispense advice to

volunteers from local dog clubs. 🐾

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Rodney Russell is a member of the Central Florida Kennel Club and the Florida State Association of Dog Clubs. He is long-time enthusiast who has been active in Agility and other companion and performance events.

## Why Does AKC Hide its Light Under a Basket? AKC Needs to Make Itself Visible and Relevant to Dog Owners

*WHITNEY COOMBS, Catoctin Kennel Club*

AKC

- Why has the American Kennel Club yielded the advertising high ground to the “animal rights” groups?

- Why has AKC allowed itself to be defined by PETA, HSUS, the “creators” of designer dogs, and the rescue people?

- Why hasn’t AKC done a better job of explaining to the pet purchasing public why it’s important for them to register their dogs with AKC?

- Why hasn’t AKC strengthened its image as the Champion of Dogs by relating to the public all the things that we do for dogs in this country?

- Why has the American Kennel Club become invisible and/or irrelevant to most of the American dog owning public?

AKC has a number of very powerful stories to tell the American pet-owning public, but they are not being communicated. We seem to have chosen to keep the stories to ourselves. It’s time that we change this approach and start to tell the world about the American Kennel Club

and the dogs that are good enough to qualify for an AKC blue slip.

Over the past few decades we have allowed PETA, HSUS, and the other radical extremists to portray dogs purchased from serious breeders as “in-bred,” “unhealthy,” “high-strung,” and “overpriced.” Our dogs are described as only being good for the show ring, but certainly not capable of being an acceptable family pet. These groups have managed to turn the facts around and convinced the public that it is far better to “rescue” an unknown and unwanted dog from a shelter or rescue group, than it is to purchase a carefully bred and loved dog from a serious breeder. Even more ridiculous, the puppy mills have turned mongrels into high-priced “designer dogs,” touting the puppy’s cuteness and ignoring its unknown health and temperament background. Unfortunately, without any countervailing message from AKC on the benefits of buying from a reputable breeder, the public has come

to accept these stories and is wary of breeders.

At every AKC Delegates Meeting we are told that dog and litter registrations are declining at precipitous rates. Continuing along our current path, there is no reason to expect that registrations will not continue to decline. The offer of a piece of blue paper really hasn’t been much of a motivating factor. Now is the time to change the way we do things. We need a new direction. We need to start telling the public why they should register their dogs with the American Kennel Club. It is imperative that we provide them with specific benefits that they will realize from AKC registration.

And, we need to start telling potential dog owners why it’s important for them to buy from an AKC breeder.

The time has come to shine our light and advertise who AKC is, what we are doing, and how we help meet the needs of America’s dog owners! 🐾

## Term Limits: Decision Time

*JANICE SPARHAWK GARDNER, Rockingham County Kennel Club*

The Bylaw that limits the number of terms an AKC Director can serve consecutively was discussed at the May 2010 meeting of Directors, and their conclusion was reported in Attachment A to the minutes of that meeting. I urge you to read this attachment. It can be found on pages 89 – 90 of the June 2010 issue of the AKC Gazette, Volume 127, No. 6, or on the delegate portal of the AKC web site. The conclusion reached by 11 of the 13 Directors was that the term limits

we currently have should be eliminated. I disagree.

When this topic was considered by the Delegate Bylaws committee earlier this spring, their vote whether to support the repeal of term limits resulted in a 5 - 5 tie, which was broken by the Chair because she believed that the proposal should be debated and decided by the entire Delegate Body. We will do this at the September general meeting; passage will require a two-thirds vote. If suffi-

cient Delegates vote in favor of the proposed amendment, our current term limit Bylaw will be repealed.

There have been discussions about the possibility, if this proposal is defeated, of making an alternate proposal of a four-year hiatus from the Board before one could be a candidate again, rather than the current one-year absence. Parliamentary procedure requires that this alternate proposal cannot be voted at the September meeting,