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WASHINGTON □ Barack Obama will be the 44th president of the United States following a landslide victory based on strong support from an overwhelming percentage of the electorate. He also carried the Democratic Party to virtually unassailable power in both the House and Senate.

Obama sought after and received the strong endorsement of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and this animal rights organization most certainly will try to cash in its political chips in ways that are likely to threaten dog owners, owners of other kinds of animals, hunters, gun owners and farmers.

That is not mere speculation. It is the way American politics works. To the victor go the spoils.

For dog owners, the next four years likely will decide our future. If we fail to act cohesively and effectively, our ownership of the dogs we love is doomed.

We will not be polite and we will not sugarcoat reality.

This is the political reality we must face in order to preserve dog ownership rights:

- Dog owners who support Obama must play a major role. You are the only group of dog owners who can get through to The President-elect and his allies in Congress at this crucial point in time. You are the only dog owners who can convince President-elect Obama that HSUS and other animal rights groups are distorting the truth to accomplish a larger hidden agenda. You are the only people who can make our voices heard as the President sets his legislative agenda and makes key appointments. It is imperative for dog owners to have a strong and clear voice on the Obama Transition Team.
- Dog owners who oppose Obama need to stuff it. President-elect Obama simply won't listen if you whine, moan, complain, or huff and puff venom. This will cause your voices to be ignored. If you want to do something to save dog ownership, you must set aside your political differences with The President-elect and attempt to communicate with him, and also with members of Congress. Venom will accomplish only one thing: It will assure that HSUS is the only voice heard by President-elect Obama. You lost the election. It was a slaughter. Deal with it. Obama has promised to reach out to his political opponents. It's time for you to reach out to him.
- The majority of dog owners have buried their heads in the sand. They have done nothing. They are fiddling while Rome is burning. They are the real enemy of dog ownership because they are the huge majority of the American electorate and their silence has served the interests of the tiny minority of animal rights fanatics. In every poll on dog ownership issues, they outnumber animal rights advocates five to one, but their voices are not being heard by the politicians. If you don't stand up and fight back now, all will be lost. You will have only yourselves to blame. You no longer can depend on having other people fight your battles. If you don't begin to fight back against the animal rights groups, your rights will be ripped away from you. No one can protect you any longer. You must protect yourselves.
- Some dog owners spend more time and effort trying to destroy unity than they do fighting against the animal rights groups. Several dog owners' organizations preach only to the choir and battle each other for "turf" and the myth of "leadership." Petty rivalries will destroy us. Some dog owners point fingers at other dog owners and label them as "good" or "bad." This is a thinly disguised attempt to deal away the rights of some dog owners in order to save their own privileges with Caesar. They are the modern equivalent of Benedict Arnold. They will sell their soul and beg for a bowl of porridge. Our advice to these organizations and people is simple: We either hang together or we hang separately. Get it?

The 2008 election was one of the most divisive and emotional in modern history. Many supporters and opponents of both candidates passionately expressed anger, outrage, distrust and bitterness toward their opponents.

At best, healing will be difficult to achieve. At worst, political antagonisms will boil over and the new power structure will attempt to destroy and bury the old. In today's political reality, many elected officials see dog owners as vestiges of the past.

While both sides have spoken of unity and reconciliation in the days following the election, the truth is that this has happened only rarely in American politics. When one political viewpoint has gained supremacy, its adherents tend to exploit their power to the greatest possible extent and bury the opposition.

Like it or not, the magnitude of Obama's victory has placed dog owners, hunters, gun owners and farmers in the crosshairs. After decades of seeing ourselves as the mainstream, we have found ourselves in the uncomfortable

and dangerous position of being seen by government as irrelevant outsiders who are merely reactionary and outdated: Modern rednecks, if you will. That is the message HSUS will be imparting to President-elect Obama.

Like it or not, dog owners, hunters and farmers have the present status of "non-persons" in the Obama Administration. That is because all of the organizations that represent us actively or implicitly opposed Obama's candidacy (because of the HSUS endorsement), while HSUS enthusiastically supported Obama. It is human nature for Obama to listen more empathetically to supporters than to opponents.

We cannot ignore this reality.

Our only hope is to convince President-elect Obama that the vast majority of Americans want to preserve the right of animal ownership without interference from government.

Furthermore, we have to convince him of what we all know to be absolutely true: That this is the best thing for animals. Never in human history have dogs had better lives than they do in modern America, and that this is because their owners love them and care deeply about their welfare.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance firmly believes that animal owners, hunters, gun owners and farmers are still the mainstream of America. However, it also is indisputably true that many of us did not make these issues a high priority in deciding how we voted this year.

We can be certain that HSUS and other groups that oppose us will loudly proclaim that the 2008 election has proven that we are an insignificant political and social force in modern America. They will claim that our voices and our rights don't count anymore.

We must prove otherwise to President-elect Obama.

The way to start is to contact Obama's Transition Team and express your concerns about the hidden HSUS agenda for the future of animal ownership. President-elect Obama must learn the truth about HSUS and the animal rights movements, and it is up to us to inform him.

The truth about HSUS is that it is an animal rights group based on the belief that the private ownership of animals is exploitation, including for companion animals, and its agenda is to reduce animal ownership in America as rapidly as is politically feasible. HSUS's long-range goal is the complete elimination of domestic animals.

HSUS, which is very well organized and opulently funded, is a master of public relations that has learned all of the tricks to bombard the American public with distorted horror stories about animal owners, thus manufacturing political pressure for restrictive laws. HSUS constantly pounds the media with stories about puppy mills, backyard breeders, dog fighters and animal hoarders, with the goal of painting all dog owners with a tar-covered brush.

Don't kid yourself. They are talking about you.

HSUS deliberately ignores the truth, that the vast majority of people who own and raise dogs care very deeply about them and give them the best possible care. The HSUS agenda is to severely regulate all animal ownership, to take away our rights to raise animals and make the basic decisions about their lives, to subject all of us to constant oversight by government, and to create frightening liabilities.

Please also urge The President-elect to limit the advisory role of HSUS, because the organization is a special interest group that does not represent the views of the vast majority of Americans. A huge majority of us want to own dogs, cats, horses and other animals. About half of us want to hunt and the future of American wildlife depends on hunters, who are the only group to match their mouths with their money. More than 90-percent of us want to eat meat, and do not want to become vegan vegetarians.

Strongly but supportively urge The President-elect to listen to our voices when he makes appointments, develops a legislative agenda, and reviews administrative policies.

Here is a link to a form to send your comments to the Obama Transition Team:
<http://www.change.gov/page/s/contact>. Please do not delay sending your letter to the Obama team, as many important things are happening behind the scenes right now.

We urge dog owners to take a supportive approach and to refrain from saying anything that could be viewed as antagonism toward the new President-elect. Remember that the purpose of writing is not to score political points, but instead to let Obama's team know the sentiments of the American public about animal issues. Our goal is to counteract HSUS propaganda with the truth and to let the incoming president know what the people do and don't want.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance has contacted the Obama Transition Team and offered our services to the incoming Administration. We have specifically requested to participate in the selection process for key officials in the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, and also to serve on a proposed animal issues advisory board. We do not know if our request will be accepted or rejected, but we strongly believe that the President-elect needs to hear the concerns of dog ownership advocates.

When contacting the Obama Transition Team, please keep the following issues in mind:

- It is vital that the new Secretary of Agriculture supports the concept of animal ownership, as dog and kennel regulation and enforcement on the federal level ultimately stem from this appointment. Any new federal laws about animals, including dogs, will be handled by this agency. The Department of Agriculture administers and enforces the Pet Animal Welfare Act and the National Forest system. Another USDA program regulates the interstate shipment and farming of game birds. Obama will appoint the new USDA secretary.
- Obama also will appoint the heads of USDA's Pet Animal Welfare Act program, the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) program and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), which administers National Forest lands and sets management policies. Land and wildlife management decisions stem from this appointment, including the continued use of hunting as a management tool, habitat management practices to benefit wildlife, and conducting field trials on public lands. There will be much pressure from HSUS to limit hunting and allow only natural forces (such as storms and fires) to determine habitat. NAIS tracks the movement and location of all farm animals, including horses, and soon will require continual monitoring of the location of all horses used for dog training and field trials. Some sources say that dogs may be included in NAIS at some point.
- Another key Obama appointment will be the new Secretary of the Interior. This person will administer public lands for the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation Services and the National Wildlife Refuge system, and also effectively controls all state-owned public lands used for hunting and field trials that receive funding from the Pittman-Robertson Act. The new Secretary of the Interior and other Obama appointees will manage the bureaus of this agency that will play key roles in the future of field trials, hunting with dogs and habitat management.
- It is very likely that an amendment to the Pet Animal Welfare Act will be introduced in Congress early in 2009. At present, this Act governs only kennels that sell dogs on the wholesale level. However, several recent HSUS-backed attempts to amend this law would have greatly expanded the number of kennels that are federally regulated, and would have affected almost everyone who raises puppies or keeps a moderately sized kennel for any purpose. Sen. Dick Durbin, who was Obama's key mentor in the U.S. Senate, sponsored two HSUS-sanctioned amendments in 2008, including the currently pending "PUPS" bill (the "Puppy Uniform Protection Statute"). This legislation also may come as an amendment to the 2009 Farm Bill, which was a Durbin tactic earlier in 2008.
- The Transition Team includes Bart Chilton, who was chief of staff and political liaison for the National Farmers Union, and also worked for USDA. His NFU affiliation may mean that he is inclined to support private ownership of farm animals. Another member is Carole Jett, who retired this year from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, which works with federally owned National Forest land that is used for hunting and cover dog field trials.
- And Vice President-elect Joe Biden has received 100-percent positive ratings from HSUS for many years, and may play a key role in the Obama Administration on animal issues.

It is no exaggeration to say that dog owners will face unprecedented challenges over the next four or more years, and that HSUS and other animal rights groups will enjoy unprecedented influence in the White House and Congress. An HSUS blog says that House and Senate candidates endorsed by the animal rights group prevailed in the recent election by a 290-to-17 margin. That is sobering news for dog owners.

In the strongest possible terms, we urge every dog owner in America to join and actively support at least one organization that is fighting to preserve your rights. Participation is imperative. Without your participation and support, dog ownership in America will be doomed. Sitting on the sidelines is not an option.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance would be honored by your support of our efforts on your behalf.

Supporting statewide organizations also is vital. Most states have active Federations of Dog Clubs, hunting dog federations and other local or regional groups. They also need your help so that they can help you.

No organization can perform miracles, and none is stronger than the support they receive from their members. The essential roles of organizations are to develop working relationships with elected officials, to bring dog owners together for coordinated action, to keep dog owners informed about the issues, and to provide them with a way to take effective action as citizens.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance represents owners, breeders and professionals who work with breeds of dogs that are used for hunting. We welcome people who work with other breeds, too, as legislative issues affect all of us. We are a grassroots movement working to protect the rights of dog owners, and to assure that the traditional relationships between dogs and humans maintains its rightful place in American society and life.

Please visit us on the web at <http://www.americansportingdogalliance.org>. Our email is ASDA@csonline.net. Complete directions to join by mail or online are found at the bottom left of each page.

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