

Introduction

You and other advocates—all of us involved in animal rights and rescue—have reached a remarkable historical milestone. We've created a popular culture in which everyone in the United States has an opinion about the treatment of animals and animals' rights. Thanks to you, most men and women now ponder their own relationship with animals and humans' uses of animals. We are rightly proud that a few good laws and local ordinances protecting animals are now on the books and a few more become law every year.

But I ask you to face one fact squarely and honestly: From coast to coast, state laws and local ordinances affecting animals remain appallingly weak, even those applying to dogs and cats, our culture's favored species. As for non-companion animals, billions continue to suffer unimaginably abusive treatment and cruel, unnatural deaths in so many (legal) ways. Often we try to win very modest legislation, yet suffer many more defeats than victories.

Now we must transform this milestone into a turning point. We must learn how other grassroots issue groups have come to wield power in the lawmaking arena. We must become political for animals, so we can win the really strong laws and ordinances that would release animals from pain. Such laws and ordinances have powerful opposition. Yet they are winnable—if we organize our support into voting blocs—that is, political organizations for animals—in our towns, cities, counties, and states.

Voting blocs' power in the lawmaking arena stems from endorsing candidates for elective office and motivating some voters to vote for the group's endorsed candidates. An issue group's power is a simple matter of electoral arithmetic. At every level of government where voting bloc organizations are active, lawmakers fear incurring their wrath. These lawmakers know that if they don't vote on legislation the way the organization wants, it may endorse the opposing candidate—and on Election Day deliver enough votes to the other guy to jeopardize the lawmaker's re-election.

The bottom line is this: Voting blocs for animals can achieve laws and ordinances that are now mere fantasies. They will remain fantasies until we pursue them through voting blocs. How do we do this? It's easy—if we are willing to challenge our old assumptions and adopt new ways of thinking and doing. If we have resolve.

Every issue group that *wields power* in the lawmaking arena does so through voting blocs, not through charities or individuals who plead their case on the merits.

Every issue group that *achieves* strong laws and ordinances does so through voting blocs.

Every issue group—*except ours*—that *wants* strong laws and public policies pursues them through voting blocs.

Mind-boggling to the politically uninitiated is how few politically organized constituents are needed to scare a lawmaker into submission, or even to vote him or her out of office. Many issue groups with *minimal* public support are true power players in the lawmaking arena—because they organize their few supporters into voting blocs.

I want this MANUAL to propel you to roll up your sleeves and launch a voting bloc for animals in your town, city, county, or state.

This MANUAL will show you how to launch your voting bloc, step by step. It's easy to draw increasing numbers of members to your voting bloc. I promise you, once you get into it, you'll never look back.

Imagine winning local ordinances that: require shelters that provide true comfort for animals of all domesticated species when kept outdoors and regulate the time and conditions in which they may be outdoors; restrict or ban dog tethering or penning; restrict or ban breeding, while providing public funds for spaying and neutering; require truly humane animal control policies and sheltering, including policies that focus strongly on cats' needs; ban pet stores from selling animals, the use of animals in circuses, rodeos, dog and horse racing, and the hunting and trapping of wildlife; ban the sale and production of veal and *foie gras* and other atrocities of factory farming; and restrict laboratory testing on animals, moving toward its elimination.

Imagine achieving these changes in your locality. In nearly all parts of the United States, town, city, and county lawmakers *can* legislate directly on all these issues (it's true!) In other communities (in states that restrict local governments from banning recreational killing, for example), lawmakers can achieve the same results through highly restrictive regulations and other ordinances. Lawmakers *will* do all this, *if* you embrace and act on the lessons this MANUAL provides. This is for real, because voting bloc-power can have revolutionary effects.

Now imagine winning equally strong and encompassing laws at the state level. All state legislatures can legislate directly on all these issues.

Enforcement can be as much an electoral issue as the laws and ordinances themselves. Every law enforcement officer is part of a chain of command that leads to elected officials who can be held accountable on Election Day for what the officer does or does not do. Where judges and prosecutors are elected, voting blocs can achieve stronger prosecution for violators of these ordinances and laws. Where judges and prosecutors are appointed, voting blocs will influence them, because they function in a political context.

This MANUAL may draw many of you into a storm of urgency. Those who are able can start immediately to organize politically in your town, city, county, or state—whichever is appropriate to your goals and the time and resources you can commit. Those less ready for a quantum leap in power can meld political organizing into your plans without losing your passion or resolution. The rest of you can vow to support, financially and by volunteering, any political organization for animals that is born in your jurisdiction. And I urge you to pressure existing rescue and rights groups in your area to get with the program and launch affiliated political organizations.

If we adopt this proven strategy, we can

...Reduce the aggregate suffering of animals at an unprecedented pace, with no more effort than we're now expending.

...Spawn new political leadership among animal rights and rescue advocates to launch and sustain these voting blocs.

...Provoke existing animal rights and rescue groups to scurry to establish affiliated political organizations or team up with other groups or advocates in their area to do so.

...Spark no less than a revolution that brings about a profound restructuring of animal advocacy in every community.