

AKC Legislative Conference January 28-29, 2012

The information load at the conference was so intense that only the highlights will be covered. The After Hours discussions that were germane to the conference will be covered in a subsequent report.

Conference speakers were Patti Strand, NAIA; Jennifer Clark, Phil Guidry, Sarah Sprouse, Lisa Peterson, Sheila Goffe, Margaret Poindexter, AKC; Senator David Rouzer (NC Senate); Suzanne Anglewicz, NRA; Attorney Sheila Kessler and Attorney Marty Greer, DVM, Animal Legal Resources, and panelists Linda Hart (COFED), Michele Kasten (IFDCO), Gail LaBerge (Georgia Canine Coalition) and Julian Prager (PFDC)

After Patti Strand's excellent presentation on Ballot Initiatives/Humane Relocation presentation, the conference was off and running hard. The attendees were enthused and almost every speaker was given extra time, which was taken from breaks and lunch hours. In fact, we went through the Sunday lunch hour and past the scheduled end of the meeting until 2 p.m.

Patti Strand: NAIA National Director. Patti discussed the steps in *creating an initiative...* the strategizing, the research, the development of a broad-based coalition, the maximization of the message, and the need to have a competent, specialized firm to carry it forward. Patti detailed each of these steps, clarifying the need for understanding the process before any initiative is undertaken. She explained that some organizations win even if the initiative fails because of the funds raised during the process. It doesn't matter if there were dishonest presentations or if emotional images were used of already illegal acts.

Humane Relocation: Dog Ownership as an exploitive issue -- "Cause Marketing Campaign. This creates a commodity -- "Adopt, Don't Buy." Because their marketing strategy is so effective, the ability to buy dogs is decreased; therefore dogs are imported, displacing dogs bred in the U.S. Patti discussed the various downfalls of mass importations of dogs -- FL case of hundreds of pups having to be euthanized, new diseases, rabies, etc. Why don't we breed more? Advertise more? Peer pressure, re: newspaper ads. Fear from ARs. Suggestion for newspaper ad: "Contact me for more education about this Breed" rather than a direct for sale ad.

Mention of next NAIA Conference, Los Angeles 11/10-11. Temple Grandin will speak, among others.

Jennifer Clark: AKC Canine Legislation Manager. *Why Legislation?* Legislators see a problem and want to fix it; pressure from constituents to find a solution. Hot Legislation Issues: BSL; Crop/Dock; Debarking, Ownership/Breeding Restrictions, BSL (total ban/ MSN), Insurance; Increased License Fees, Arbitrary Ownership Limits: It's not the quantity of dogs, it's the quality of their care.

Phil Guidry: Senior Policy Analyst, AKC. *What an Analyst does.* An analyst focuses on content, context and legislative intent; provides reasoned guidance regarding the potential impact of proposed legislation on regulation, on AKC and the purebred dog community. Phil went through a sample bill, cautioning not to stop at the summary but to read the bill itself. Remember 'they' have to win at each step of the process... 'we' have only to win at one step. Discussion on need to clarify language to clarify laws. When asked to analyze a bill, Phil watches for unintentional consequences in every word of amendments or new bills. He focuses on content and legislative intent. As an analyst, he provides reasoned guidance regarding potential legislation or regulation.

Senator Rouzer: Senator Rouzer discussed the *different types of state government and legislators.* Citizen vs. Professional legislators; Part time vs. full year legislative sessions. His most important message was to get to know legislative staff, (they run the show); get involved in campaigns by supporting them and getting to know staff personally. Get to know who is handling agri issues. Volumes of mail helps, but personal contact trumps. Two things you should never do: 1) Never try to force your way on them, 2) Don't threaten (I'll won't vote for you if...). Always be professional, Educate, educate, educate. Make your letters and handouts ONE page, not volumes. Establish Relationships. You need a lobbyist; you need somebody who knows everybody.

Margaret Poindexter: AKC Inspections Program. General Counsel: Main points: We've been keeping dogs in kennels forever, not new to large kennels now. AKC promotes breeding, but promotes animal welfare, too. They assist customers to come into compliance; they set forth care and conditions. There are NINE inspectors for kennels. AKC inspects home/hobby breeders and large kennels. This year they are hitting 1st time inspections more. Even if an AKC inspection is done a few days before, if there is a seizure or a complaint, AKC suspends the referrals. (My question)

Personally, this next speaker gave me the most information on what I need to know -- *Grass Root activism*, how to get them, how to keep them -- so this section will be longer.

Suzanne Anglewicz: Manager of Political and Legislative Activities, NRA: NRA has SIX federal lobbyists, + 4 additional people to answer their members' questions. They are *Grassroots* activists; they are involved in Legislation vs. Election vs. issue education. They have built an effective grassroots model with Recruitment, Education, Mobilization and Activation. The foundation of that model is the existing base, who needs to be in that base, and being open for new resources. How do you keep them? Make them recruiters. Keep them in the knowledge base, as it breeds confidence in activism. Always consider the audience carefully, whether members, general supporters or lawmakers. Give Fact and FAQ Sheets and Newsletters. ONE sheet, points... one issue at a time.

Have Grassroots workshops, on-line conferences, social networking and new media. Have 'on-line' town hall meetings. Because of enhanced mass communication, there is an evolving political dynamic providing more of a voice than ever. It is influencing elections and elections. Advertising tools available: You Tube. 3 billion videos are watched daily. Politics and current events make up the second most uploaded content. Education tips: educating members vs. general public vs. lawmakers is all different. Recognize that they may not know anything about the issues. Educate; don't complain. Provide as much clear, concise information as possible. Be consistent, relevant, update regularly with fresh and relevant information. Knowledge + Action = Power. Educate your members. More tips like that are in my notes. She presented much more information than that, and I'll get it all out sometime soon. www.nraila.org

Another 'need to know' for me.

Sarah Sprouse, AKC Legislative Analyst: Sarah discussed some of her past employment serving as Chief of Staff to a California State Assemblyman. Her job with him gave her great insights on how constituents are perceived, what works and what doesn't. She works closely with clubs and fanciers, advising them on legislation at both the state and local levels. What's most important? Vote! Legislators have stats on who votes in every election, not HOW, but the fact that you DID vote. She reminded us to toot our own horn. Invite legislators to a show, to a video screening of "Safety Around Dogs" or "Best Friends." Bring them to positive activities, i.e., matches, RDO Day Activities. 42 States have now passed a CGC Resolution. Go for that positive day. "They" want a "spay Day." When a bill/ordinance is proposed, find out the status, call the city/county clerk's office, get information on hearing dates, the timeline, and get copy of the existing law. Examine the language and find out WHY the proposal was introduced.

Most important is to MEET with staff and educate, educate. If your legislator is not of your ideological bent, get someone to go with you who share his or her viewpoint to help. Start letter/email campaign. BE PROFESSIONAL. Never use foul language, never threaten, and always respect the Office. Put emails in same format as letters, name the same as listed on voter registration rolls. (No Stormy? No, no Stormy) If working from a form letter, PERSONALIZE it. Staff will often discount form letters. DO Lobby Days; take small gifts -- buttons, tote bags, etc., with Organization name if relevant. Don't bring big pile of information for them to read -- they won't. A single page with bullet points on letterhead is best. Use junior handlers, puppy matches, agility matches and events. Remember to invite Legislator's family, too.

AKC is there for you, helping to interpret language and more. You can contact animal oriented businesses -- veterinarians, groomers, boarding kennels, etc. Remember to provide an alternative when a bad law or ordinance is introduced.

Lisa Peterson, AKC Communications Director: *PR vs. Advertising.* We were given a binder full of PR material, sample PR releases, different letters for inviting

politicians to events, etc. Lisa stressed getting the media to our areas, to our events, to our meetings and presentations. Get media to Lobby days. Use PR whether we support or oppose a legislative issue. State why we oppose or support and offer solutions when opposing. Give statistics -- the media loves stats. Offer editorials, (Op-eds). Get a list of Bloggers, and blog. Use Facebook, Twitter. Train your club members to be Media Masters. Get organized. Who can speak for your club? The spokesperson should be articulate, friendly and positive. Other pluses are the professional, well-dressed member who is always available for interviews. Establish a contact with a Reporter -- journalists often become politicians☺. *Do's and Don'ts of Giving interviews.* DO Stay focused, prepare message points and write them down, reinforce key messages. Assume ALL is on record (she emphasized that, no cute chatter that can bite you in the butt); know your audience; use sound bites be quotable. Lisa played a couple of interviews where she turned a negative question into a positive sound bite. DON'T lie, speculate, say 'no comment,' forget key messages, repeat negative words, questions (VERY important to learn how to do this), fill in awkward silences (let the interviewer do that), use jargon or acronyms not commonly used.

If you have a website, Facebook page, keep it updated! You can use the sites and pages to publicize events, be a press center and a contact page. Go to the AKC Press Center and get tips. Be sure to 'retweet' journalists, "like" them and comment on issues. There are tips on how to 'convert' negative, controversial issues on the Press Center Site. You can stage photo-ops and send them with a press release to papers. They will print them! Use press releases with great photos to announce an event. Use Letters to the Editor. In closing, Lisa gave a great example of positive vs. negative in a snip of a TV interview on Fox News Live. Lisa was pleasant, well dressed, smiling and positive. Judy Mancuso looked sour, negative and 'dark.'

Sheila Goffe AKC Director of Government Relations: *Using AKC Resources effectively.* AKC has two major types of resources: personalized assistance and material resources. There are 5,000 AKC dog clubs in US that Government Relations needs to inform on issues of concern. Main local issues have been: nuisance ordinances, BSL, enforcement issues. Remember, some communities do not want outsiders. Be careful not to send out too many alerts (example: the Republican debates). A good award at events is to give out Legislator of the Year. Check with Government Relations about the details. An AKC PAC check could be given them at the same time! The material resources are on the AKC Government Relations website, such as the legislation tracking map, the state economic impact statement, sample letters of 5 key issues. Remember to open with personal comments -- who you are, why the bill might affect you, etc. In closing, Sheila commented that a new letter opposing PUPS is being sent to Legislators and that Conference attendees would be listed on the letter. Some discussion of the AKC PAC. Only individuals can donate, but have to be a member of an AKC club.

Attorneys Sheila Kessler and Marty Greer, DVM: *Presentation of a Great Dane Seizure in Wisconsin.* Quotes: "We criminalize social problems" "US has largest

prison population in the world.” “We have to help each other, we have to stop beating each other up.” I’ll have to apologize here. Sheila and Marty’s presentation was so riveting and, in a way, awful, that I took very few notes. In a nutshell, they were called in to help two women (they represent one of them) who, because of the economy and personal problems, moved into a friend’s house with 29 Great Danes. A ‘friend’ turned them in, and they discussed the court cases from that point on. They talked of not being allowed to ‘vet’ the dogs, and the circumstances of how the dogs were treated once they were removed from the “bad environment.” One terrible picture was of a lovely, healthy Great Dane when seized and a starving skeleton when recovered.

Linda Hart (COFED), Michele Kasten (IFDCO), Gail LaBerge (Georgia Canine Coalition), Julian Prager (PFDC). *Federation Building:* The following are sound bites from each of the panel members without attribution.

When looking for help, go to Farm Bureaus, Hunting Groups, etc. When reporting to your members, be transparent, people want to know where the money goes. If you can’t afford a full time lobbyist, and most federations can’t, hire a part time lobbyist. Suggested fees were from \$12,000 to \$24,000 a year. Ask what members can do to help. If no lobbyists, use virtual AKC help. Make connection in the capitols, but in district offices, too. Have facts. On lobby days, get a table. Have quotables. “When you think of a dog, think of us.” Table ‘gifts’ don’t have to be expensive, book marks with quotables, bright colors, leashes with Federation/Organization name on them, COOKIES (or some other nibbles, M&Ms with imprints). Count up the club members’ YEARS of dog breeding experience and use that when speaking or writing. Some clubs can count up to hundreds of years of dog breeding experiences. Use the dog shows and events as occasion to have the legislator give out the BIS Rosette. Give the Legislator of the Year Award during BIS (along with an AKC PAC check).

Looking over my notes, I can tell by handwriting and the lack of good detailed notes that I was getting to the end of a very long weekend. If I remember more, I will add it in posts or emails. The presentations are mixed up too, as a couple presenters spoke Saturday instead of Sunday.

Stormy Hope
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