

Legislation - What's Hot

*By Joan Miller, CFA Legislative Information Liaison
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Are YOU The One For This Job ? - CFA Legislative Information Liaison

My job as CFA Legislative Information Liaison is coming to an end. The CFA Legislative Committee is now seeking a replacement for an extremely challenging job that will provide personal growth and gratification for the right person.

Background

Like many cat fanciers I was oblivious to legislation until 1990 when a proposal came close to where I lived. Suddenly the San Mateo County, California, Pet Overpopulation Program (POP) and a proposed ordinance, requiring every dog and cat to be spayed or neutered, opened my eyes. I realized that this would be devastating for the future of pedigreed cats and CFA. With a few other cat fanciers I attended my very first legislative community forum. We were appalled at the visuals showing barrels of dead animals and being told we, as breeders, were responsible. Kim Sturla, at that time the Director of the Peninsula Humane Society and with the Fund for Animals, had developed an emotional strategy to convince the public and lawmakers that the solution to the killing of animals in shelters was to stop all breeding. She became famous for her "Kill the Crisis Not the Animals" campaign, and her statement that "Our goal is to make [the public believe] breeding [dogs and cats] is like drunk driving and smoking".

Two important organizations had been established in Northern California – The Animal Council and The National Pet Alliance. Both welcomed cat and dog fanciers. We attended many meetings to plan strategy, and we were successful in effectively diluting the original San Mateo proposal.

This was my start, almost 25 years ago, and it has been a roller coaster ride ever since. I have been rewarded by working with others dedicated to addressing laws detrimental to the breeding of pedigreed cats and the concept of pet ownership and with cat fanciers who advocate for humane treatment of feral cats, homeless and unowned stray cats. The following outlines how the CFA Legislative Committee and the CFA Legislative Group, consisting of three people, function. Included is a brief job description for the Legislative Information Liaison position.

General Overview of CFA's Legislative Effort:

The CFA Legislative Committee is chaired by George Eigenhauser. Other members are Fred Jacobberger, Phil Lindsley and Joan Miller. The Committee provides overall direction for CFA's philosophical positions on legislative matters. We determine the procedures, priorities and activities of the Legislative Group, which is responsible for the day to day actions and work. The Committee manages the Sy Howard Legislative Fund, evaluates requests for funds, solicits, encourages and acknowledges donations and determines disbursements from the fund.

The Legislative Group came about when delegates at a CFA Annual meeting voted strongly in favor of a full time paid position for a person to handle legislative responsibilities. The job is multifaceted requiring management capability, legal expertise and good communication and writing skills. In July 1997 it was determined that the best approach would be a job sharing plan with three members, each working part time. I became the CFA Legislative Coordinator. Sharon Coleman, Attorney and President of the Animal Council, was the CFA Legislative Legal Analyst and she remains in this position today. Anna Sadler, who had a public relations and professional writing background, was the first CFA Legislative Information Liaison until her death in 2004. George Eigenhauser, Attorney,

became CFA Legislative Information Liaison from 2004 until 2009. He then assumed the Coordinator position and I took the job of Information Liaison.

George, Sharon and I have worked closely together to assist and guide our “grass roots” legislative advocates. Our jobs, during much of the year, have become full time. The work load varies considerably depending on the number of local jurisdiction, federal and state proposals presented throughout the year. The three of us are paid monthly by CFA as independent contractors.

Group communication is primarily through daily emails and occasionally by teleconference. We primarily organize and support our local Legislative Network Liaisons. This involves quickly mobilizing local teams and helping fanciers take the lead in opposing detrimental legislative proposals in Cities and Counties throughout the United States and Canada. State and federal matters are handled through Internet posted alerts, the CFA web site, letter writing efforts and testimony at hearings when possible. The Group provides overall coordination, guidance, support materials, letter writing, alerts, and reporting. All three of us create strategy and determine positions to help local grass roots teams be effective.

The Group has ongoing contact and good communication with AKC, National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA), Responsible Pet Owners Alliance (RPOA) of Texas, The Animal Health Institute (AHI), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), Alley Cat Allies, TICA and many other aligned animal interest organizations.

Legislative Group Job Descriptions:

George, as **Legislative Coordinator**, is responsible for the activities and overall effectiveness of CFA's legislative efforts. He handles Federal and State bill tracking, reading hundreds of proposals and selecting those to monitor. He provides CFA position statements, writes letters on behalf of CFA, CFA Alerts and CFA website updates. He attends conferences, such as the HSUS Expo and SAWA (Society of Animal Welfare Administrators) annual conference, and meetings, such as the annual Pet Night on Capitol Hill strategy session in Washington, DC. He provides reports to the CFA Board of Directors, makes presentations at CFA Annual meetings and responds to fancier emails.

Sharon as **Legislative Legal Analyst**, reviews and comments on legislative proposals, provides legal background/general advice for fanciers and researches existing statutes. She often prepares complete legal analysis for State or Federal proposals as well as algorithms and other materials to help fanciers and others understand the legal consequences of bill proposals or regulations. As an AKC dog fancier and President of the Animal Council she provides perspective on dog issues.

The Legislative Information Liaison writes articles for the CFA e-Newsletter each month on timely issues and regular in depth articles for CATTalk Magazine to keep the cat fancy informed and educated. The job includes monitoring of numerous legislative lists, such as Pet-Law and NAIA, to be aware of proposals. Also, keeping track of epidemiology studies, public affairs and shelter issues is critical in gathering facts and data that enable us to establish positions on issues. The person in this job provides general guidance, points to make, sample letters for fanciers, letters to editors of newspapers (for locals to submit), flyers for shows, testimony for hearings (for locals), help with Annual presentations and updates of lobbying materials. The job requires responding to daily email requests for help and providing materials for lawmakers.

CFA Legislative Information Liaison position search:

Overall criteria – A person with a strong understanding of the cat fancy (either currently breeding or a past breeder), who can communicate and work well with fanciers. An imperative qualification is good writing skill. You must be able to write friendly easy-to-understand emails to fanciers, convey legal

concepts as well as prepare policy materials with a professional style. Also, the ability to prepare press releases and letters to the editor drafts. Prior experience with cat/dog legislative matters is important. You should be able to understand the general philosophy and share the views and strategy already established by CFA.

In addition - The position requires a stable personality, the ability to work under high pressure, deal with the demands of cat fanciers, meet deadlines and have the patience to explain views and provide information to complete newcomers as needed. Must interact well with George and Sharon. Must have the time for extensive on-line communication and be familiar with computer programs, PowerPoint and social media. You need to be able to work occasionally long hours with short notice. And you must be in the financial position to do all of this with minimum compensation.

Speaking ability would be a real plus. The ability to interact with outside organizations, dog fanciers, other cat association people, veterinarians and the animal protection community would also be valuable.

The job is extremely interesting with new challenges every day. There will be the opportunity for a gradual phase-in period with guidance from Joan, George and Sharon. If you feel qualified and want to discuss your interest in this job or you want more information contact George Eigenhauser geigenhauser@allmail.com
