

SPOTLIGHT ON THE CAPITOL!

When the ***Kennel Spotlight*** heard that the ‘**leading abolitionist of animal agriculture**’ Wayne Pacelle, President of HSUS was going to meet with some legislators at our Missouri Capitol in Jefferson City, we knew that we definitely had to go! I met up with some 70 plus breeders on January 12th to help counteract some of the ongoing damage from the HSUS. Despite the fact that our Proposition B bill has already passed, it will not go into effect until November of this year and so our fight is far from over!

Led by Karen Strange of MoFed and Barb York of MPBA, our group walked the halls of both the House and Senate to meet with any of the legislators who had time to speak with us. We had a very positive response and several of them took time from their busy schedule to stop and address the breeders. Representative Tom Loehner from the 112th District talked about the possibility of the current licensed breeders being ‘grandfathered’ in so that they would not lose their businesses. He encouraged all pet professionals to contact their local reps and tell them their ‘personal’ stories. Representative Ed Schieffer from the 11th District had a lot to say about the various Ag groups and Farm Bureau joining the breeders to get Prop B changed. He recommended that we as breeders and pet owners need to explain to our legislators the potential loss of revenue not only to our families, but to the local communities and state. He also suggested that we send ‘letters to the editor’ to our local newspapers educating the public about the devastating effects of Prop B.

Senator Bill Stouffer of the 21st District who filed SB 4, a full repeal of Prop B, graciously allowed our entire group into his office and took the time to answer several questions about the unconstitutionality of the bill. He, along with several of the other legislators was in agreement that Prop B was in their top priority to address since it concerned all animal agriculture and production. We were all acutely aware that while we were voicing our concerns to the different senators and representatives, Wayne Pacelle was also there meeting with the same legislators, pleading his case that the voter ‘numbers’ in the big cities were what constituted the ‘will of the people’. We passed by him several times in the hallway but there were no outbursts or threats from our group as most people would expect. It was important to us that the representatives of our state recognized us as ‘professional pet producers’, and not the backwoods, ‘animal abusers’ that Mr. Pacelle and his HSUS group have portrayed us as.

We were very pleased to again meet with Senator Mike Parson of the 28th District, who had made a great presentation at the Bolivar meeting held on Dec. 30th (see article on pg. 24). Being from an agriculture background and raising cattle himself, he was very committed to seeing Prop B changed. He gave the breeders some excellent advice on what they could do to help him and the other legislators make this happen.

It was a great experience for me personally to go to the capitol and see ‘first hand’ the lawmaking process. I even had the opportunity to meet with Representative Bill Reiboldt who is from my own district and a dairy farmer himself. Dave Miller, a fellow breeder and advocate from Neosho and I, spoke to Rep. Reiboldt about the detrimental effects of Prop B to our families and livelihoods. We really appreciated him and the other legislators we met with that day, taking the time to speak with us about the critical loss of revenue to rural Missouri due to Proposition B. We look forward to seeing the positive results from our representatives in protecting our rights as animal producers, ranchers and farmers. I urge anyone in the animal agriculture and farming communities to write to your local representatives and explain to them your own personal and financial loss due to Prop B. Make sure you remain professional and polite and be sure to thank them for their time and consideration. And above all, stay in contact with our lobbyists, **Karen Strange with MoFed, Barb York with Missouri Pet Breeders and Mindy Patterson with the Alliance for Truth**; these ladies are our soldiers on the front lines, protecting YOUR RIGHTS!