

Dear Assembly Member:

I am writing to urge your support of Oreo's law, which your committee is expected to hear on Tuesday. As the executive director of a nationally-recognized animal shelter in Minnesota, and as the host of the nationally syndicated Animal Wise Radio program, I have much experience with the questions and personalities surrounding this issue.

I have been aggressively lobbied by some opponents of the bill, asking that I withdraw my support of it. Unfortunately, they have been unable, from a policy perspective, to articulate any reason this bill should not become law.

Some of them have tried to invent a host of scary "what if" scenarios suggesting that if Oreo's law passes, terrible things would result. However, they present no evidence these things will happen. In fact, all evidence is to the contrary. Oreo's Law is based on the Hayden Law, which passed in California more than a decade ago. None of the issues being brought forward by opponents of Oreo's Law have actually transpired in California.

More surprising still: many of those now opposing Oreo's Law have historically touted the Hayden Law as one of the most important animal welfare laws in the nation. So, why the sudden change? I say, follow the money.

Oreo's Law is named after a dog the ASPCA called their "Miracle Dog". They used her in their fundraising materials nation-wide and got a lot of money using pictures of her "recovery". Unfortunately, the ASPCA did not provide Oreo sufficient time to recover from her injuries and they killed her, in spite of the fact that other groups were willing to take her and continue her physical and behavioral rehabilitation. ASPCA did not return phone calls or emails from those offering to take Oreo. Instead, they killed her.

The resulting outcry has left the ASPCA with egg on its face. Because this bill was inspired by actions of the ASPCA, the shoe is suddenly on the other foot. As a result, the head of the ASPCA has personally pledged to kill the bill named after the dog his agency unnecessarily killed, in spite of the fact that he was a big champion of Hayden in California.

ASPCA has an annual budget in excess of \$100 million. They carry a lot of influence over the Mayor's Alliance, and other organizations in your state. When I have spoken with opponents of Oreo's law about why they are in opposition, eventually one topic comes up – the ASPCA. Some say they "feel bad" that this bill paints the ASPCA in a negative light. Others have simply said they could not support the bill out of respect for the ASPCA. An effort to engage in meaningful discussion about the policy becomes all about people, personalities and politics.

In reviewing Oreo's Law animal welfare advocates and New York elected officials share a common objective: We should be looking past the emotional politics and personalities involved in order to see the policy issues clearly. Whether or not the bill has merit is, I believe, unquestionable. I, therefore, urge you to pass this bill, in spite of the strange politics within your local animal welfare community.

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