

Government and Animal Rights

Government's serving mainly corporate and institutional interests over human and nonhuman animals' interests causes suffering, threatens civilization and all life, and undermines the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, and the state constitutions established in accordance with the Constitution. People in government have authority and opportunity to change that by making humane treatment of animals public policy rather than choice. Responsible Policies for Animals shows people in government how they can help to do that.

In every area where government is failing – human physical & mental health, ecology, climate, food safety, violence, war, poverty – inhumane treatment of nonhuman animals – human use, ownership and destruction of other animals – is a root cause of the big problems, and humane treatment offers the best solution. The Framers of the Constitution sought to establish justice, promote the general welfare, provide for the common defense, and secure the blessings of liberty to the people and their posterity. Government is not fulfilling those purposes today. One reason is the failure to extend basic rights to nonhuman animals. None of the Constitution's purposes is likely to be fulfilled until all sentient beings have rights that protect their basic interests in personal and ecological sovereignty.

In order to achieve ratification, the Framers initially preserved slavery and ignored the plea to “remember the ladies.” But they provided for expansion of rights beyond the property-owning male citizens who initially had them. Basic rights were eventually extended to women; slavery was abolished; and the right not to be property of another was established. Primary human rights were bolstered by many secondary rights articulated in statutes and court decisions. Despite fear of expanding rights, in every case it benefited society as a whole and those who had dominated others who eventually obtained rights.

Nonhuman animals, like human beings, are biologically “hard wired” for liberty and autonomy. When individual rights expand to include all sentient beings, human beings will benefit – and it is doubtful the U.S. or humanity as a whole can progress ethically, spiritually, or materially until that happens.

Today's industry-government-media complex, subordinating human interests to corporate interests and crushing the spirit and the physical, mental, economic, financial, and ecological wellbeing of U.S. citizens and people worldwide, is undermining the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions established in accordance with it, and the rights our government is entrusted with protecting.

Recognizing that (1) humane treatment of animals is a human value that can only be fulfilled when nonhuman animals have basic legal & constitutional rights starting with personal and ecological sovereignty, (2) inhumane treatment of animals causes and exacerbates the big problems besetting human beings today, (3) the industry-government-media complex, especially the animal-welfare system, continues to move the human world further from humane treatment of animals, and (4) people in government have authority and opportunity to move society toward humane treatment of animals, Responsible Policies for Animals (RPA) works to help government bring policy and practice into accord with humane principles and thereby with the Constitution and the public interest.

Subordinating the public interest to corporate and money interests based on inhumane treatment of animals, government today rejects the animal-rights movement out of hand, refusing to understand the human need for animal rights and the fact that without such rights humane treatment of animals is not possible. This myopic approach undermines the Constitution and the public interest and threatens all life.

Consumer culture – driven by the industry- →

government-media complex to benefit short-term private money interests over the long-term public interest – locks people into pseudo-choices that harm people and other animals alike. RPA helps people, including in government, recognize which industries should no longer be sanctioned because of their destructive nature. People in government cannot serve the public interest and uphold the Constitution unless they stop supporting inhumane industries.

RPA discusses specific matters with people in government when possible. Whether communicating with RPA or not, people in government can help move communities, states, the nation, and other societies that aspire to rule of law and rights-based government in the right direction by adhering to some basic principles:

➤ *Work to remove public support – subsidies, purchases, institution funding, employee reimbursements – from inhumane industries, including meat, dairy, egg, fish, feed-crop, pesticide, animal-experimentation, oil, blood sport, and others.* This includes ending our land-grant universities' support of the meat industry (see RPA Factsheet #1). The meat industry is the most inhumane, unhealthful, and ecologically destructive. Human beings are natural herbivores and evolved as prey, not predators or hunters as is widely believed – the latter being cultural not biological developments. (See "The Comparative Anatomy of Eating" by Milton R. Mills, M.D.; *Man the Hunted* by Donna Hart & Robert W. Sussman; *Plant Roots* by Rex Bowlby; *The Food Revolution* by John Robbins; *The China Study* by T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D.; "Now, It's Not Personal! But Like It or Not, Meat-Eating Is Becoming a Problem for Everyone on the Planet," Editors, *World-Watch*, July/August 2004.) Serving the meat industry is not in the public interest; ending public support of it is.

➤ *Support policies and practices that use as little land, fuel energy, and other resources as possible; diminish sprawl, car dependency, and the human ecological footprint; and accord respect to human-scale over large-scale endeavors and the commonwealth over private concentrations of wealth.* This includes taxing land rather than "improvements" and eliminating corporate rights, which came to exist through a misrepresented Supreme Court case,

not an actual Supreme Court decision. (See *Small Is Beautiful* by E.F. Schumacher; *The Geography of Nowhere, Home from Nowhere*, and *The Long Emergency* by James Howard Kunstler; *Power Down* by Richard Heinberg; *Unequal Protection: The Rise of Corporate Dominance and the Theft of Human Rights* by Thom Hartmann; *Give Me Liberty!* by Gerry Spence.)

➤ *Avoid objectifying human beings as consumers, constituents, patients, etc., and respect them as individuals, nurturing their functions as citizens exercising reason and ensuring that public schools place education over indoctrination and training.* This includes campaigning with detailed speeches and essays, not mass media and fliers; not accepting donations above token amounts the impoverished can afford; putting human interests above corporate and institutional interests; addressing root causes of problems; and basing decisions on the full range of available knowledge.

Subject to suffering and the full experience of life – being sentient – nonhuman animals, like humans, have demonstrable interests in not being made to suffer needlessly and in not being prevented from living according to their biological nature, in their species' original natural ecosystems. In addition to violating animals' interests by using countless billions of them in countless ways and treating others as if they don't matter, humans are driving other species extinct at 100 to 1,000 times the rate preceding agriculture – a disaster also for humans and other surviving animals. Human beings are experiencing astonishingly high rates of physical and mental illness, and are ever-increasingly perpetrating violence and laying groundwork for further violence.

Those problems arise from inhumane treatment of animals. Humane treatment would go a long way toward solving them. People in government can help Americans exercise their liberty, creativity, and pioneer spirit to move beyond make-believe solutions that hack at the branches of evil rather than strike at the root. Or they can let us continue adrift in so many wrong directions. RPA urges people in government to serve the public interest and uphold the Constitution through humane treatment of animals.

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