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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY REVIEW COMMISSION

We are writing as concerned constituents, informed citizens, and dog lovers to urge you to support the proposed amendments to the Dog Law regulations set forth by the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement.

If the issue here was merely that of "free enterprise"--as it was referred to by Representative Jim Cox at the hearing before the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives on March 6, 2007--we would remind you that free enterprise under our system is subject to reasonable protections provided by the State. Were that not the case, there would be no FDA, FTC, FAA, FCC. However, we contend that the issue is not free enterprise but, rather, responsible stewardship of man's best friend.

Those of us who love and care about dogs do not view them as commodities. We view them as valuable living beings, deserving of our attention, our care, and, above all else, our protection. Until now, otherwise thoughtful and caring people have turned a blind eye to the appalling conditions under which dogs in puppy mills are forced to exist. And, because of that, only the voice of the breeder has been heard. This is changing.

The efforts of advocates to improve the regulation of dog kennels are gaining the public's attention, and the citizens of Pennsylvania are awakening to the travesty of puppy mills. Indignation against this neglect and cruelty is rising, and the voice that will be heard will be that of the voter's.

As for the proposed regulations, we can only ask this...why would a reasonable, intelligent, compassionate person argue against:

- doubling the required cage size for dogs;
- improving standards such as sanitation, drainage and ventilation;
- prohibiting people from buying dogs from unlicensed dealers;
- requiring that all dogs be provided with a minimum of 20 minutes of exercise per day; and
- requiring prompt and necessary veterinary care for sick and injured dogs?

The breeders argue against these changes, saying they will cause undue financial hardship. The reality is that, for them, providing humane conditions and quality care for the very dogs upon whom their livelihood depends will take a bite out of their profits. This is the free enterprise of which Representative Cox speaks -- profit taking precedence over life.

The fact is that dogs in puppy mills suffer a horrible existence. Opposing these changes indicates your belief that current conditions are acceptable, and that dogs are nothing more than commodities--objects--to be treated with substandard care and minimal attention.

Objects don't express joy and sadness. Objects don't suffer pain and grief. Objects don't love and give unconditionally.

Please don't turn a blind eye to this very important public concern. We urge you to support the proposed changes and help move them through the regulatory process in an expeditious manner.