

# Did LA (Finally) Save the Elephants?

09 May 2014 Written by Daniel Guss

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**VOICES**-The road to an elephant's hell is paved with peanuts and good intentions.

Six months ago, LA City Council made a woefully inadequate law designed to stop the abuse of circus elephants that perform in LA. I wrote about it a few days later in the Daily News.

Recently, they improved the law by banning all torture devices, not just bull hooks, including electric prods and baseball bats, which are all used to force the pachyderms and their babies into gut-wrenching fear- and pain-based submission.

But the law contains a serious flaw: animal torture and exploitation will in continue in LA until 2017.

Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell was dismissive of critics this week by telling the media that **"they don't see the big picture of what we are doing."**

Of course they do, Mitch. City Council made a law that -- by virtue of your changing it now -- you agree was inadequate. Six months ago, you did not allow public input from nearly 100 humane activists in attendance on the day that you and your colleagues substantially amended the proposed law, and the scope of the agenda item. City Council regularly allows additional input in instances like that. It is exactly this type of "leadership" which breeds cynicism and distrust of City Hall officials.

Like the elephants themselves, your process is a needlessly tortured one.

Only in the public sector would an executive get away with simultaneously changing his flawed product (i.e. the original law) while being dismissive of those (the humane activists) who tried to warn him and his colleagues about its flaws from the outset.

Toward helping us better understand, O'Farrell and Paul Koretz (the architect of the flawed law, along with influence from a well-heeled political donor) should explain to the public why they will tolerate the elephant torture, and other animal exploitation, until 2017. City Council colleague Gil Cedillo said it was to protect the jobs of circus workers. Had public comment been allowed, he could have been challenged to make that nexus.

City Hall has a track record of making humane laws that seem to be more about the politician's resumes and photo opportunities rather than effectively legislating to help animals.

Do you remember LA's spay/neuter law? A few years ago, then-Councilmember Ed Reyes correctly predicted that the very well-received recommendations of their own Spay Neuter Advisory Committee **"would never be implemented because there is no political will to make them a reality."** Reyes was right. The dormant report gathers dust to this day. It was nothing more than an exercise in waste, false hope and political puffery.

How about LA's ban on pet sales? The city recently issued \$760 worth of dog breeder permits to a filthy and congested auto repair business, for pits and Chihuahuas no less, which are the types of dogs killed more than any other in the city's shelters. There are scores of similar uninvestigated complaints.

LA also has a dog licensing law, but collects only a sliver of millions of dollars in due revenue from it each year. Those funds could be applied to better cruelty- and pet sale-enforcement, and more free spay/neuter programs which ironically would lower the cost of operating the shelters. Reyes' thought on City Council's lack of political will applies here, too.

But let's get back to the elephants and what City Council needs to do.

LA needs to ban circuses which exploit all animals, period. Today.

They should invite any of the exciting, internationally recognized circuses that are cruelty-free to come entertain us. You would be stunned by the shows they put on. Do this and we will come and applaud everyone who made it a reality.

Market forces will also make Ringling Bros. either get modern and past its abusive animal exploitation, or simply lose its audience and fade away.

Right now, all we have is an inadequate law that is simply less inadequate than it was before.

O'Farrell and Koretz need to either explain why or admit the legislation is seriously flawed and take steps to repair the damage ... protect the elephants ... immediately.

*(Daniel Guss, MBA, is a writer who lives in Sherman Oaks.)*

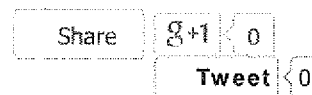
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Marie Atake · 4 days ago

So true that "the very well-received recommendations of their own Spay Neuter Advisory Committee ... was nothing more than an exercise in waste, false hope and political puffery."

I was on that committee working on the recommendation report pulling all-nighters, right after my best friend's passing. I did it, even being robbed a chance to properly mourn, because I thought the city would implement it. Sure, the city called it a million-dollar report and gave us each a commendation award, but I bet nobody actually read it.

I should have known when I resigned from the LAAS Commission, not to waste my time doing the right thing for this city. Just like Sterling's quote about himself, this city does "not evaluate what's right or wrong." It's all about money and voting power, hence the city officials continue to seek advice from those who are clueless.

Will this city ever give us something other than disappointments? Ever?

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Dan → Marie Atake · 4 days ago

Agreed. Thanks for your past and ongoing leadership on humane issues in L.A. You took a stand, and CITY HALL blinked.

Some day, we will stop voting for people based on the ethnicity of their last name or because they said something nice to us, in favor of electing people to ACCOMPLISH things.

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