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When Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, D-Van Nuys, decided he was going to carry [AB 1634](#), the mandatory spay-neuter bill for California pets, he met with legislative aide Zak Meyer-Krings, who had agreed to staff the bill. He told his staffer about his own experience staffing animal bills for his former boss, former Assemblyman Ed Vincent.

"I sat him down and said 'It's going to be like nothing you've ever seen before,'" Levine said.

Levine was right. Meyer-Krings said the bill has taken over his life like no other legislation he's worked on--and this was after staffing [AB 651](#), the Compassionate Choices Act, for Levine last session.

But some other members and staffers around the Capitol say they wish Levine had sat down with them, as well. They've been inundated with phone calls, e-mails and faxes, they say--even if they had little to do with the bill and had decided their vote months ago.

"It's amazing how motivated people are, both for and against," said Assemblyman Anthony Adams, R-Hesperia. "I've never been lobbied this hard on anything."

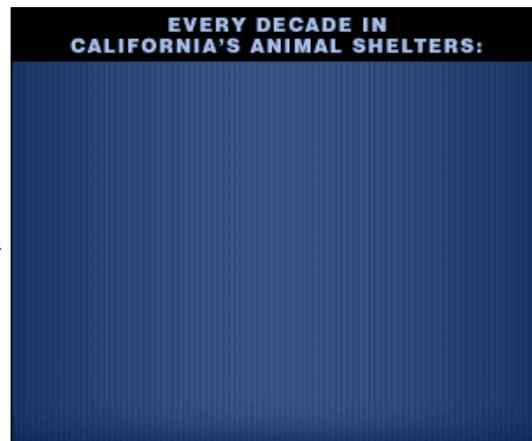
Every year or two, a bill catches the public imagination. Two years ago, it was the gay-marriage bill from Assemblyman Mark Leno, D-San Francisco. But even the public outcry around Leno's legislation pales in comparison to the reaction to Levine's bill, many in the Capitol say.

AB 1634 calls for all dogs and cats in California to be spayed or neutered by four months of age, though Levine plans to amend this to six months.

"It certainly is the champion of the fax machine," said Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa, R-Biggs.

Levine's staff has joked about buying a fax toner cartridge and a ream of paper for every office in the Capitol, but LaMalfa said his staff reported going through three toner cartridges. He said he made a stack of the for and against faxes and letters to bring as a visual aid to an Appropriations Committee hearing. The against messages were 18 inches high, compared to only 4.5 inches for the support letters. But that was before Levine's staff brought by a three inch stack of support letters.

Meanwhile, many Democratic offices reported getting similar amounts of correspondence, though most of the people they're hearing from support the bill. The support side also seems to



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have most of the A-list talent. Recently retired The Price is Right host Bob Barker stumped for the bill, calling six Democrats in the Assembly who were believed to be on the fence about the bill. Four voted for it.



Comedian Bill Maher recorded an unsolicited video rant in support of the bill. Circulating around on Internet, he calls on parents to forgo showing their kids "the miracle of life" with puppies or kittens and instead "show them the miracle of responsible pet ownership." People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has been circulating a support letter signed by 19 celebrities, including Pamela Anderson and William Shatner.

The oppose side has sparked a good deal of creativity, however. An anonymous 24-line poem circulating around the Capitol complaining the bill would be unenforceable and wishing the bill "a worthy dead end." Meanwhile, a letter from a "very upset citizen" that found its way into numerous

Capitol offices describes--often in all caps--how her dog, Bandit, wakes up each night at 1:17 a.m. in the fear that "goons" are coming.

"Why should Sir Lloyd Levine care at all about my dog's balls? ... My dog's balls are none of Mr. Levine's business."

Just as PETA has been helping coordinate the Yes side, several groups have been coordinating opposition. The American Kennel Club even has a "canine legislation hotline" people can call, and has the bill as one of the top items on their Web site.

Indeed, staffers say, people seem to very aware of where the bill is in the legislative process. Or, as one staffer put it, "I'm not sure the Senate has the full picture of what's waiting for them." While the fax efforts mainly have hit Capitol offices, staffers say, the phone calls have focused more on district offices.

Leno said he was happy to give up his title as author of the most controversial bill of the session. Marriage equality is becoming a mainstream idea for many people, he said--and as crazy as mandatory spaying and neutering sounds to some people, Levine's idea may become mainstream soon, as well. Leno voted for [AB 1634](#).

"Breaking with the status quo is always going to be controversial, no matter what the area is," Leno said.

One staffer expressed that gay marriage and mandatory spay-neuter both caught the public's eye because both play into the changing concept of the American family. As people live longer and marry later, a growing number of people see their pets as their kids.

Adams said that his American family has been taken over by the bill. His wife, Deanna, trains dogs for agility contests and has been very involved in shelter issues. While he opposes the bill, he said he would support targeted efforts to reduce the "recidivism" rate in shelters. The percentage of dogs that come back to shelters after being adopted is similar to the number of California prisoners who end up back in jail, he said.

Despite his warnings to his staff, Levine said he was caught off guard by the huge response to the bill. While he appreciates people's interest, Levine lamented that people don't get as excited about health care and other important issues. In the meantime, he said he's been getting a quite a bit of ribbing over how his legislation has taken over the Capitol.

"In general, the joking about the bill has been good-natured," Levine said.

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