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## Urges support for animal protection legislation

by Gina Downey

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I am writing today to express some thoughts on bill AB1634 the California Healthy Pets Act which, if passed into law, will require most cats and dogs to be spayed or neutered.

I realize the general public may not realize the gravity of pet overpopulation but as a rescuer I have been on the front lines and have visited shelters on a regular basis. I have seen firsthand the tragedy of pets multiplying so quickly.

While the opposition argues that euthanasia has decreased and a few communities may have a lower percentage of animals killed we kill over 400,000 pets each year at an enormous cost to tax payers and at an enormous burden to rescue groups struggling to save what we can. While the average kill rate is 50 percent some areas have a 90 percent kill rate, most areas offer free or low/cost spay/neuter that is not utilized to its potential.

Often humane groups send out free coupons to have as little as 10 percent utilized. You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. We have this huge problem yet apparently no one is causing it. Those causing it all point the finger elsewhere. Breeders will need to get a permit but what is the harm in that when rescues have to jump through many hoops to function as non-profits? Extra paperwork, maybe so, but it's a small price to pay really when you consider the alternative. Service, dogs, working dogs and show dogs also exempt.

I invite the general public to read the bill text for themselves. I urge anyone in support to take action and not wait for the next guy to do it because the opposition is strong with misinformation and scare tactics. I will certainly be letting my position be known to my Assembly Member Lori Saldana and will encourage her to support AB1634.

I encourage anyone who hates the idea of a tail-wagging dog being euthanized to do something about it. There are over 300 animal organizations in support and more coming on board every day. We have no agenda other than to retire from rescue one day, without a pension plan I might add. Most of us are volunteers trying to clean up someone else's mess.

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