



## **Engagement in Issues-Based Advocacy Work**

**Summary:** The Ohio Animal Welfare Federation (OAWF) will engage in public education and advocacy on legislative issues that are relevant to our mission. This may include supporting, opposing, or simply raising awareness about legislation at the federal, state or local level so that we may advance and protect our animal welfare mission. All activities and communications referenced in this document will be conducted in compliance with IRS Rules on Lobbying for 501(c)(3) organizations.

### **Scope of Activities**

Activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Creation and dissemination of written position statements on issues or legislation;
- Public comments in the media, OAWF communications, or in public forums;
- Legislative testimony;
- Limited lobbying of elected officials about relevant issues;
- Advocacy with administrative offices;
- Indirect lobbying of elected officials through “calls to action” to board members and volunteers, supporters and the general public; and
- Assistance with petition drives and other issue-based community organizing

### **Guidelines for Ranking Issues**

In general, the OAWF will focus advocacy efforts on state issues that impact the work of our member organizations or the welfare of animals in Ohio. The OAWF may address federal issues that are relevant to our mission.

The following prioritized criteria will guide our level of involvement and resources committed to advocacy on public policy issues:

1. Issues that impact:
  - a) County humane societies
  - b) Investigation, prosecution, or sentencing of animal-related crimes
  - c) Humane agents or their authority
2. Issues that impact county dog wardens or municipal animal control officers assuming agreement with positions taken by the Ohio Dog Warden’s Association or Ohio County Commissioners Association.
3. Issues impacting animal rescue groups.
4. Promote a larger animal welfare agenda for animal species that are served or handled by the member organizations.

5. Promote a larger animal welfare agenda for animal species that are not customarily served or handled by member organizations (i.e. protection of wildlife)

### **Due Diligence and Authority to Represent OAWF Public Policy Positions**

There will be times when the description of a bill's intent may seem supportive of our mission or interests at face value, but the actual language contained in the bill either doesn't align with the communicated intent or presents other concerns. In order for the OAWF to exercise an appropriate and responsible level of due diligence, the Executive Director must be able to review a bill's or ordinance's language in detail and consult with the Board of Trustees before OAWF is able to take a formal position. The OAWF will only take a formal, public position on bills that have been introduced and not on draft language.

Formal, written or verbal positions on federal, state or local bills/legislation that have been introduced will require board approval before being released to our constituency, the media, the public, or lawmakers.

### **Definitions of Positions on Proposed Legislation That May Be Taken**

Strongly support – the language as presented does not require amendment, the bill addresses a critical issue that is highly relevant to our mission. The OAWF strongly supports the bill as currently written.

Support – the language as presented does not require amendment and the OAWF fully supports the bill as currently written.

Support with amendment – the intent of the bill is supported but the language must be amended prior to the OAWF being able to support the bill itself. (We may provide either detailed amendment language or simply reference a broader concern).

Neutral – neither support nor oppose bill, most likely because the issue is not highly relevant to our mission or is outside of the OAWF's scope of expertise.

Oppose – fully oppose bill as currently written as it will negatively impact the OAWF's ability to fulfill our mission and/or conduct other business that may impact our ability to fulfill our mission.

### **Extenuating Considerations:**

- Media interest and/or requests for comments on "hot button" issues may drive the need to prioritize issues.
- The Legislative Committee chair, or his/her designee, will provide consultation to the Executive Director on public policy issues that may require immediate response prior to reasonably obtaining full board input.
- The Executive Director is expected to exercise due diligence, to seek legal or expert advice when necessary, and to ensure compliance with IRS advocacy/lobbying rules within the scope of executive authority. S/he shall be held accountable for protecting the OAWF's 501(c)(3) status.

*Adopted by the Board of Directors June 5, 2019, and modified May 4, 2022.*