

Engaging Public Officials

Every community is different, and there is no “one size fits all” template for handling local public officials. However there are a few general guidelines that may help you advance a **No Harm No-Kill** (NHNK) message while pointing out the dangers of the Extremist Agenda.

It is important to remember that if the Extremist Agenda establishes itself in your community, there will eventually be a call for policy changes that will implicate your local public officials. The distinction between the Extremist Agenda and NHNK is not only about caring for animals, but also about public policy that impacts how a community addresses animal welfare needs.

Emphasize Success

Public officials like it when programs work well. Be sure to highlight the progress your organization and/or community have made in decreasing intake, improving shelter care and increasing live outcomes.

Talk Money and Resources

Public officials are held responsible for budgeting to ensure programs operative effectively. Be sure to stress that achieving a responsible and sustainable NHNK community requires a commitment of money and resources so that it is done right.

In contrast, the Extremist Agenda downplays the importance of financial commitments and dedicating resources, including staffing and adequate capacity.

Provide Face Time and Materials

Meeting face to face with your public officials can leave a valuable impression. When meeting, come equipped with materials that are easy to digest but grounded in data and facts. Such materials may include highlights of your successes in lifesaving and NHNK talking points.

In some cases it may be appropriate to hire a government affairs expert who has greater contact with public officials. Be sure to

provide him or her with presentable materials that advance the NHNK message.

Be Cautious with Officials Sympathetic to the Extremist Agenda

The Extremist Agenda is able to push through resolutions and legislation by finding at least a handful of sympathetic public officials. Public officials who are leaning in the Extremist direction need to be handled cautiously.

It is important to not back them into a corner and provide as much factual information as you can. Use your judgment and decide if it is helpful to provide them with case studies where the Extremist Agenda failed and case studies where NHNK succeeded.

Collaboration, Not Divisiveness

Most public officials are weary to be associated with divisive figures. It may be helpful to point out the slanderous tactics of the Extremist Agenda while maintaining a reasoned, calm and cooperative tone.

Public officials have to win re-elections and try to avoid extremists, even in progressive communities.