

**Kess, Quinn**

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**From:** Peggy Wampold [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, November 16, 2013 5:26 PM  
**To:** CTPS  
**Subject:** Letter to the Task Force

Margarette L. Wampold

48 Columbine Rd.

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November 15, 2013

Dear Task Force Members:

As a resident of the State of Connecticut I have serious concerns about the purpose of a task force set up to stop pet stores from selling puppies obtained from commercial breeders, in favor of dogs obtained from rescue organizations. Before I go any further, I want to tell you that I have no interest in any pet store or commercial breeding facility but I am a resident who loves and owns two dogs and three cats. One dog is a rescue from Bandit's Place and two cats were rescued after some neighbors moved away and left their cats to fend for themselves.

The Hunte Corporation is one of the largest commercial breeding kennels in the country. I have not personally been to their facility, but I have seen pictures of it and talked to people who have gone to see it. From my perspective it is a state of the art facility with excellent animal care. Their animals live in large runs, not the small wire cages as depicted in the e-mail sent out by Connecticut Votes for Animals today. That e-mail urged people to write to the task force in support of banning pet stores from buying their dogs and cats for resale from commercial kennels. Frankly, as a responsible animal owner, I would prefer to be able to buy an animal from the Hunte Corporation with known origins, and known to be free of diseases, than one of unknown origins and life history. I also support the American way of life which includes freedom of choice. I think that every person in this country should have the right to choose where they get an animal from and what kind of animal they want. Many men and woman have died since this country was born to give us that right and to limit our choices is taking away part of our freedom.

This raises another concern of mine and it is bigger than the issue at hand. A member of the task force is the president of Connecticut Votes for Animals and her organization is soliciting letters from the public supporting the ban on sales in pet stores of dogs and cats other than those obtained from a rescue organization, then how is she going to render a fair and impartial recommendation? I always thought that a task force was supposed to be impartial and try to put forth the best recommendation rather than offer an outcome predetermined before the first meeting. Ladies and gentlemen, that is not democracy, but autocracy which is far more dangerous and shameful than any other issue at hand.

At the present time, rescue organizations have been importing animals into the state in large numbers, I believe approximately fourteen thousand last year. There are good people and bad people in every business and activity, but it is rare for legislation to consider banning a whole business category, such as pet stores buying puppies from commercial kennels and restricting them to getting their inventory of animals only from rescue

organizations. Typically lawmakers pass laws requiring standards of care and then punish those that do not comply with them. I would support this whole heartedly. Taking the broad brush approach on a categorical basis rather than on the basis of actual practice simply codifies a prejudice and gives less regulated rescue and shelters an unimpeded marketplace advantage over regulated ones. Some rescues and shelters have their own bad apples, operating in deplorable ways. This means that they are not immune from the problem, just immune from most regulation.

The main problem is that there is a greater demand for pets than there is supply from reputable breeders, hobby or commercial. To ban pet stores from selling puppies acquired from well regulated commercial breeding facilities will exacerbate animal welfare problems by driving the pet marketplace underground where it cannot be regulated. The rescues this task force wants to encourage and that would take the place of pet stores getting their animals for resale from well run and much regulated commercial breeders are rarely regulated in any significant way and may also be found to operate in ways that are inhumane and threaten public health and safety. Have you seen the condition of the animals in the trucks hauling the animals in from out of state? How can you condone this and say that you love animals?

Some of these animals being imported into Connecticut from other areas of the country have brought in diseases, not previously known in the state. There recently was a case of a dog coming into Massachusetts as a rescue that was diagnosed having rabies and this month a cat from Georgia ended up in Vermont, also with Rabies. These are not isolated cases. Indeed Rabies is a disease that is nearly always fatal and kills 55,000 people worldwide each year and has been discovered in several rescue dogs in just the last few years. No such incidents have occurred in pet stores for more than 20 years. Again, you are proposing to swap a heavily regulated business for one that is not only unregulated, but brimming with problems.

The importation of animals to this state for the purpose of adoption has become a very lucrative venture for many, especially when they accept payment as a donation and do not pay taxes (unlike the pet stores and hobby breeders that pay taxes on every sale). We have seen in almost every instance in which enterprises start off as altruistic endeavors, but some people later find out that they can make money, and this often leads to cutting corners in order to make even more money. I think that a closer investigation would reveal that some of these rescue operations are so deplorable that they would be closed down immediately if they were operating as do our pet stores which are well regulated. Another issue is that some of the rescue organizations may, if not doing so now, start to breed their own animals for resale to the pet stores if this is approved and goes forward. Will their conditions be any better? As long as there is a profit to be made, people and organizations are going to take advantage of the situation. I would be willing to bet that some of the unsavory commercial breeders (the very ones you want to stop because of their treatment of animals) will quickly reinvent themselves into rescue facilities or organizations and continue on with business as usual. Since these facilities are not located in our state, how are officials going to be able to determine legitimate from illegitimate and who is going to enforce this determination if made?

In addition, please recognize that the horrific images and claims that the anti-pet store activists are showing you are well-orchestrated propaganda tactics designed to emotionalize and blur the issues, which just coincidentally give themselves a competitive market advantage and also a source to solicit and receive donations of money. In recent California hearings images were shown of commercial kennels that had been shut down more than a decade before.

There are bad commercial breeders and there are bad pet stores, but there are also excellent stores and commercial breeders with outstanding facilities and top of the line animal welfare and veterinary standards. If you truly want to help dogs and cats, please recommend a law that requires pet stores to source their animals from places that can be demonstrated to operate with high standards. Please do not swap a pet store that buys from an inspected and regulated breeder, for rescues and shelters whose supply chain that is totally unregulated and often include fly-by-night operators in addition to the good shelters and rescuers we all otherwise support.

My final comment is that we have many laws on the books that are not being consistently enforced now, due to lack of staff and financial backing; why not enforce these laws before we create more? Why create more laws that will be difficult and expensive to enforce? Who is going to go into pet stores on a weekly basis to verify where their dogs and cats came from and who is going to pay for this when we cannot afford the personnel to enforce the laws we have now?

Thank you for your anticipated attention to the points that I have raised. If you would like to contact me for more information I would be most happy to discuss this with you further.

Sincerely yours,

Margarette L. Wampold