

## **Talking points against HB 2151 and SB 452**

*by Clova Abrahamson*

In the paragraphs that follow I will give you some more information as background, but as I see it, my major talking point centers on retention of democratic rights by the voters of Oklahoma.

Some humane groups are calling the bills "a power grab by the Farm Bureau." That it is, but as I see it, the most salient feature of the bills is that they take a slap at democracy, by stripping the rights to make community appropriate ordinances from local governing bodies, who have been elected by the people.

As the rationale behind the bills is rooted in California's "Prop 2", I think it is important to keep in mind that Prop 2 was endorsed by 63.5% of the California voters, who voted in the Nov. 2008 election. That percentage of voters accepting a measure most surely takes the measure out of the realm of what might be considered a narrow interest or radical interest group. We can be assured that 63.5% of the California voters are not card-carrying members of any humane society. So why then did the voters so overwhelmingly choose to vote yes on Prop 2? Simply because it was not radical. It will make changes in the way some categories of intensively raised animals are treated, but only modest changes. I submit that voters may vote for what they believe to be righteous and/or humane measures. but overall, voters vote their self interest first. Thus when 63.5% of California voters put their approval on Prop 2, they did not see it as contrary to their self interest as individuals.

Whatever one might think of Prop 2 becomes somewhat besides the point when one considers that it became law through the democratic process of the ballot box, a process sacred to Americans.

We must not forget that this is not the first effort to strip democracy from Oklahoma voters. State Question 698, which would have doubled the number of signatures on initiative petitions relating to animals, was rejected by Oklahoma voters in Nov. 2002. That odious question was ordered to the ballot through referendum by state legislators at a time when the 1999 cockfight ban initiative petition was being challenged in court. State Question 698 was to assure that no second initiative petition to ban cockfighting would be possible if the first petition failed. And where were the Farm Bureau and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture during the battle that raged to ban cockfighting in Oklahoma? ON THE SIDE OF THE COCK FIGHTERS, OF COURSE.

Now there is one more thing about the vote to ban cockfighting in Oklahoma that is interesting from a historical prospective of lawmaking through democratic ballot by the people. Much was made of the fact that the majority of voters in many rural Oklahoma counties voted against the ban. But when the vote totals were re-examined to determine how the votes fell along the district lines of the Oklahoma Senate and the Oklahoma House of Representatives, it was found that in a majority of OK House Districts and a majority of OK Senate districts, the ban passed by citizen votes.

Getting back to the problem at hand, the two troublesome bills, as touching any question as to whether something similar to Prop 2 will be introduced in Oklahoma. The answer is that none is planned.

In summary, I think the obvious objection to SB 452 and House Bill 2151 is that we should oppose these bills on the basis of them being attempts to deprive Oklahomans of the democracy that is our entitlement.