



Candidate: Barbara LaWall Office: Pima County Attorney
Staff Contact: Linda McCollum, Campaign Manager
Phone: (520) 289-9119 Email: Campaign@barbaralawall.com

Animals play an important role in the lives of many Arizonans, who consistently demonstrate concern for animal protection. Citizens look to the government to protect animals from inhumane treatment. Humane-minded citizens care deeply about the positions their elected officials take on animal protection issues.

Statement to Humane Voters of Arizona by Barbara LaWall, Pima County Attorney:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding my stand on animal cruelty and abuse. Animal cruelty is a particular concern for prosecutors because not only is it wrong to inflict suffering on any living creature, research shows that intentional cruelty against animals often indicates that the perpetrator either has already committed acts of violence against people or may be predisposed to committing other acts of violence against people.

That is why I have assigned the specially trained attorneys in the Special Victims Unit to also prosecute felony animal abuse and cruelty cases in addition to child abuse, child exploitation and adult sex offense cases. They take these cases very seriously and have successfully prosecuted many abuse and cruelty cases.

Two recent prosecutions taken by my office are an example of the seriousness with which we take these cases.

State v. Zeon Weirmire In February of 2006, after an argument with his girlfriend, Zeon Weirmire immersed her Jack Russell terrier in a tub of scalding water. Then he refused to allow his girlfriend to seek veterinary care for her injured and suffering pet. When she finally did take the dog to a vet, out of fear of the defendant, she lied about how her dog, Ginger, received the injuries. Weirmire was arrested on misdemeanor assault, domestic violence, and felony animal cruelty. At that time, Ginger was still suffering. She could not use her hind legs, and her hindquarters and back had large patches of hairless, reddened, and blistered skin. Weirmire, who pled guilty to felony animal cruelty, was prosecuted by Deputy County Attorney Kathleen Mayer and sentenced by Judge Richard Fields to serve 1.5 years in prison. Ginger remains permanently scarred from her ordeal but is otherwise recovered and reunited with her owner.

State v. Wayne Dean When his girlfriend left him after years of his physical and verbal abuse, Wayne Dean tortured and repeatedly sexually assaulted a greyhound named Otis. In February of 2006, officers with Pima Animal Control and the Sheriff's Department found an emaciated Otis tied with an electrical cord and without access to water. The cord was so short he could not lie down. Otis was also bleeding and had exposed bone where his tail should have been. Wayne Dean evaded capture by law enforcement for months prior to his eventual arrest. He ultimately pled guilty to animal cruelty charges and was prosecuted by Deputy County Attorney Kathleen Mayer. On March 26, 2007, after testimony from his ex-girlfriend and the Pima Animal Control veterinarian, Judge Howard Fell sentenced Dean to three years in prison.

Our office continues to support legislation to strengthen cruelty and neglect statutes; to expand protections for animal victims and to promote responsible pet ownership. I have assigned a special Deputy County Attorney to keep up with the legislative issues on a regular basis. The 2009 legislative session may see efforts to address mandatory spay/neuter, which my office supports, but this bill didn't get a hearing last year. There will be another effort to expand the prohibitions on selling animals along public roadways and to expand "dog fighting" to "animal fighting," which I also support.

Additionally, prosecutors in the County Attorney's Office actively participate in the Pima County Animal Cruelty Task Force, created in 1999, which coordinates animal protection efforts among law enforcement, prosecutors, and community agencies.

Do you support prosecution of felony animal cruelty cases pursuant to A.R.S. 13-2910 when facts warrant such prosecutions?

Yes.

Do you support prosecution of dog fighting cruelty cases pursuant to A.R.S. 13-2910 when facts warrant such prosecutions?

Yes. We currently have a significant dog fighting cruelty case pending prosecution.

Do you support prosecution of cockfighting cases pursuant to A.R.S. 13-2910 when facts warrant such prosecutions?

Yes.

Would you utilize A.R.S. 11-1029 in order to seize and cause the forfeiture of ownership by animal owners accused of animal cruelty?

Yes. We have utilized this statute recently.

Are you aware of the connection between violence towards animals and violence towards humans that has been written about extensively in psychological and other journals? Would you be willing to present such materials to recommend stronger sentencing and appropriate treatment in such cases? Would you be interested in a bibliography, a citation list or copies of such materials?

Yes.

Would you dedicate a prosecutor to felony animal cases?

We have a dedicated, specially trained, senior prosecutor assigned to these cases.

Would you support an Animal Cruelty Task Force in your County?

We are significant collaborators and participants in our Animal Abuse Task Force.

Thank you for your time. Please return the completed questionnaire to:

Humane Voters of Arizona
Email to: HumaneVotersArizona@cox.net