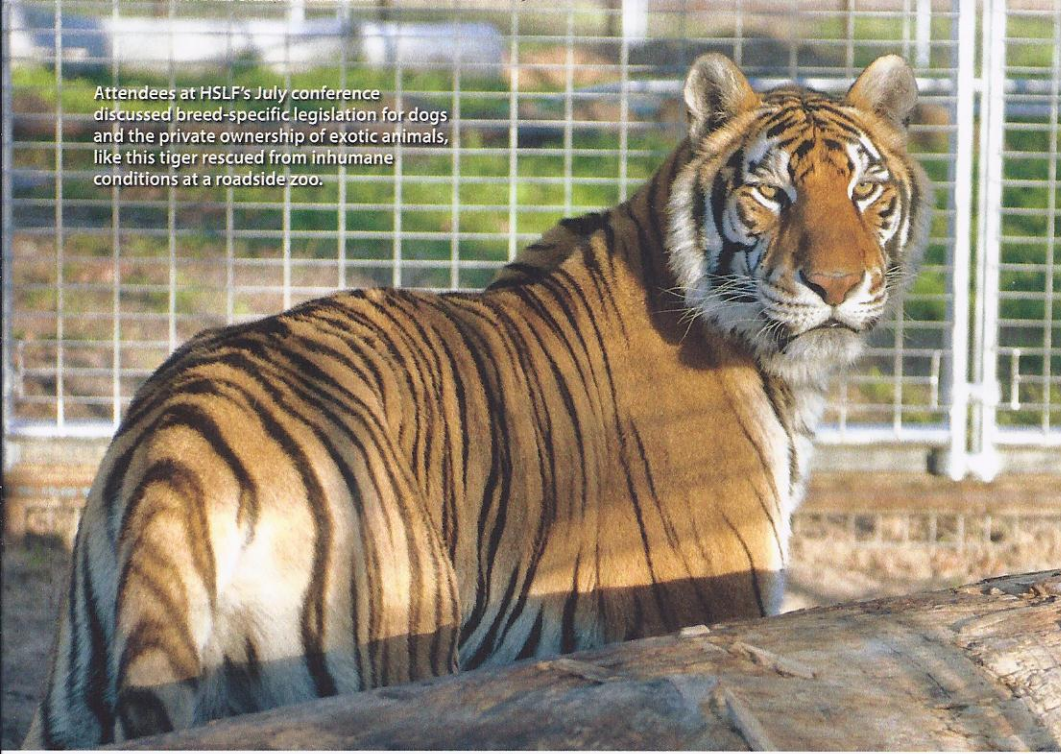


Attendees at HSLF's July conference discussed breed-specific legislation for dogs and the private ownership of exotic animals, like this tiger rescued from inhumane conditions at a roadside zoo.



"The conference, for me, was ... inspirational, and educational, and informational," says Colorado Voters for Animals president Lori Greenstone, pictured above with her dog, Nigel.

## STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

HSLF conference brings together state-level advocacy groups

As Lori Greenstone jokingly tells it, this is all Nigel's fault. Or "Lord Nigel," as her friends call the family's beloved cairn terrier.

Greenstone had long wanted to get involved with animal advocacy in Colorado. But it was her love for Nigel—the "extremely independent" therapy dog—that reestablished her connection with animals after her retirement, and ultimately pushed her into action. In February 2011, she attended Humane Lobby Day in Colorado, and later that year, she became president of Colorado Voters for Animals.

That's how, on a Thursday in July, she ended up on a plane bound for Washington, D.C., off to attend a new HSLF-sponsored conference for state-level animal protection groups. The one-day event, entitled "Humane Action: Animal Welfare and Politics," ran on the eve of The HSUS's Taking Action for Animals conference.

"My belief, over the last year and a half, has been [that] the best way to support animal welfare is to change laws," Greenstone said before her departure. "That's why I became involved, and that's why I'm hoping that at this conference I'll be able to meet and speak with people who can give me advice and ideas on how we can be the most effective in our work.

"Because we have a lot of passion, and we have a lot of love, and a lot of drive for animal welfare issues. But that's not going to be enough."

HSLF brought organizations from 18 states together to share some of those tips and begin building a grassroots network that can help with tasks such as identifying state legislators to support and oppose. As HSLF political director Dane Waters added, opponents to the animal protection movement are becoming more vocal and better organized, so events like this one can help put the movement in a better position to "push back, and push back effectively."

The conference featured a roundtable discussion about various state issues—like ways to hold legisla-

tors more accountable, breed-specific legislation for dogs, and exotic pet ownership—plus seminars on everything from producing voter guides to better using social media. Less than four months before Election Day, passing on campaigning tips was also a key goal: "We're going to help them understand how to read polling," said Waters in the days leading up to the conference, "how to understand the demographics of the district, whether the candidates are viable or not, what level of resources to put into the campaign."

In Colorado, Greenstone's organization was finalizing plans to poll candidates on animal protection issues for a scorecard. With hopes of finding ways to better publicize that scorecard, she arrived in Washington particularly intrigued by the seminar offering tips for "getting the message out." As much as anything, she was also looking for new ways to capture the passion and growing momentum she sees out there for animal issues.

"This was probably the best thing that I could have attended, especially at the stage that our group is at," she said afterward. "All of the information regarding political campaigns and how to choose the right candidate, how to support them, where to put your money, etc., was absolutely information that we will need."

For Caleb Scott, president of North Carolina Voters for Animal Welfare, the conference helped reinforce the many ways the group can make an impact with its new political action committee, the state's first devoted exclusively to animals. Also valuable: the seminar about creating a scorecard, a project his group would like to tackle in future years.

"It's something that is definitely needed, where these state groups talk to each other so we can share information," Scott says. "We gain more power by being a collective group, instead of fragmented. I think that this is a step in a wonderful direction."

We gain more power by being a collective group, instead of fragmented.

—Caleb Scott, president of North Carolina Voters for Animal Welfare