

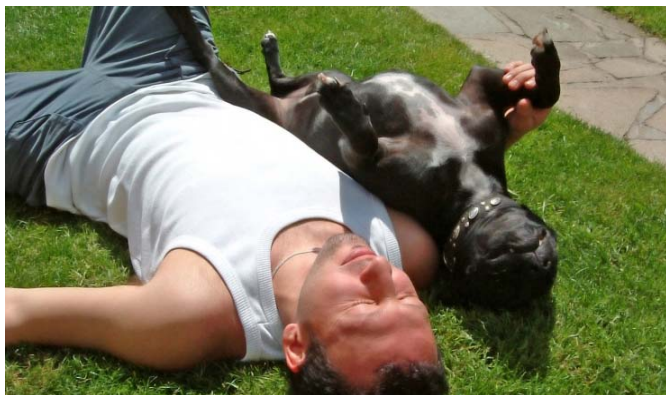
Through its work with communities across the US, NAIA has found that the only dog laws that work are ones that hold owners accountable for the actions of their dogs; that use minor or first offenses as educational opportunities; and that reward owners who make suitable efforts to do the right thing.

EFFECTIVE LAWS:

- Provide serious consequences for owners whose dogs attack people or other pets;
- Offer education and incentives to encourage responsible pet ownership;
- Allow a free trip home for loose dogs that are licensed, and/or identified with tags or microchips;
- Require attendance at obedience classes for unruly behavior; and
- Provide an increased scale of penalties for dogs that escalate their aggressive behavior and for owners who refuse or neglect to take steps to resolve issues that cause their pets to endanger the public.

Even well-written animal control laws won't solve dangerous dog problems unless they are supported by the public and include appropriate consequences, which are strongly and evenly enforced.

The NAIA project *Responding to the Data: A Guide to Constructing Successful Pet Friendly Ordinances* is available on the NAIA website at: <http://www.naiaonline.org/pdfs/petfriendlyguide.pdf>



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THE VERDICT IS IN Breed-Specific Laws Don't Work



They're costly
and unenforceable; they
punish law-abiding pet
owners, and they
kill innocent family pets.



Dogs are more popular than ever! They're house pets, sports partners, therapy assistants, search and rescue detectives, police dogs, stage performers, and livestock herders. You name it and they can do it. They can even skateboard!

But guess what: they learned all their skills, tricks and manners from someone who loved them and took the time to **train them!** The key to having a wonderful pal or dedicated canine working partner is found in their unlimited desire to please their owners.

That's why they can be trained to balance on a ball, find lost hikers or buried avalanche victims, retrieve wild game or track down fugitives.

On the flip side, though, if neglected or untrained, they can be neighborhood nuisances. And although they can be excellent home guardians, they can also be trained to guard criminal activities, and worse yet, fight.

These can be big problems. But they are problems with identifiable causes. Any dog can become a public nuisance if untrained or uncontrolled or left to run at large. And any dog trained for illegal purposes – regardless of breed – can become a public concern if he is used in illegal activities.

When dogs become public nuisances or are associated with criminal activities, it should be clear that *any* dog, schnauzer to St. Bernard, could hit the news as a bad actor. The ones that rise to

notoriety, however, do so either because their owners *didn't* train them or because someone *intentionally* trained them for illegal activities.

In either case, the finger of guilt should point toward the owner, not the specific breed of dog involved. The media-consuming general public, however, concludes that it must be the kind of dog—rather than the kind of owner—that creates the problem, when nothing could be further from the truth.

Understandably, breed bans and mandatory spay/neuter laws are simple promises to “make the problem go away.” But, they don't really work.

Because scofflaws and criminals ignore laws anyway, the vast majority of those forced to contend with new restrictions are responsible, licensed pet owners with well-behaved – yet now illegal – pets. Faced with bans, many of these owners are forced to surrender well-loved family pets, feeling that they have no choice but to hand them over to authorities for euthanasia.

Breed bans create public outrage and cause impossible enforcement demands. They also cause owners of targeted breeds to hide their ownership rather than comply with the law, ignoring licensing and rabies vaccination ordinances. And breed bans do nothing to educate the public about who's really responsible for dogs that bite: it rests with the dog owner.

Breed bans give the public and legislators a false sense of security, but they get nowhere near the root of the problem.

NAIA has a guide to constructing pet friendly ordinances that takes a different approach – one that has proven successful. It turns responsible pet owners into allies who can help with community education efforts, raising awareness of dog behavior and training needs, rather than creating alarm or resistance. Experts from training organizations like AKC obedience clubs www.akc.org, and others can be of great assistance to their communities. <http://www.naiaonline.org/pdfs/petfriendlyguide.pdf>

NAIA favors strong dog laws that are evenly and effectively enforced, with the burden for confinement and control placed squarely on the pet owner.

The model ordinance promotes conscientious ownership. It rewards responsible pet owners for their actions. It cites prohibited behavior, but educates first, and uses a graduated scale of penalties.

It reduces the number of dogs entering shelters, it is cost-effective to implement, and it promotes better relationships between dog owners and local authorities.

Any dog, Chihuahua to St. Bernard, can be taught to fight or bite. Banning popularized breeds is not the answer. The public needs to know that a better solution exists – one that is less expensive; one that cultivates pet owner support; one that actually works.