

TONY CÁRDENAS

Los Angeles City Councilman, 6TH District



March 18, 2009

Ed Boks
General Manager
Los Angeles Animal Services
221 N. Figueroa Street 5th fl.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. Boks:

Spay and Neuter Discount Vouchers are a key element to creating a no-kill city. As co-author of the new mandatory spay/neuter ordinance, it has come to my attention that the Department of Animal Services recently expressed interest in terminating the Spay and Neuter Voucher Program in an effort to reduce the \$414,000 department deficit. The cost savings of cutting the voucher program is shortsighted at best and will only result in immediate and long-term higher costs to the city. A dog or cat that is not spayed or neutered now can have six offspring within a matter of two months. Furthermore, with spring and summer right around the corner, this city could see an alarming increase in strays in our shelters. This will intensify the strain on the department's already strapped resources. It has been estimated that it could cost over \$100 to house and euthanize one animal. In addition, when you add up potential vet care costs, that figure could rise significantly. Giving discounts to help lower-income families spay/neuter their pets and comply with the law is far more fiscally sound than over-burdening our shelters and employees with animals that have no homes.

The city cannot afford to see a proliferation of stray animals. More importantly, we would be taking a step backwards in our efforts to see Los Angeles become a "no-kill" city if we discontinue the discount voucher program. When the ordinance was drafted, my focus was on drastically reducing the over 15,000 dogs and cats euthanized per year. Furthermore, it is essential to provide adequate assistance to lower-income residents. Without this assistance, these families will be further burdened and will be put at risk for non-compliance with the law. In these tough economic times, individuals should not be forced to choose between feeding their families and complying with the law.

On Friday, I will be introducing a motion to reinstate the voucher program and I will be requesting a complete and thorough report on the accomplishments of the voucher program. During these trying economic times, we must look beyond the short-term savings and make choices that are in the best interest of the City. Terminating the voucher program is not an option. I look forward to creating the policy to continue the Spay and Neuter Voucher Program. We have made a commitment to achieve a no-kill city. We have no choice but to continue a voucher program.

Sincerely,

Tony Cardenas

TONY CÁRDENAS
Councilmember, 6th District

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