

Betrayal & Deceit at the Humane Society of the United States

December 6, 2009 by [Nathan J. Winograd](#)



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

This is Faye.

She survived because of you.

Dear Brent,

I'll never forget Faye's story. I bet you won't, either.

Our team met her in Missouri, when The Humane Society of the United States helped rescue hundreds of animals from the horrors of dogfighting. She'd been wounded badly in a fight, and a dogfighter had mercilessly cut off her lips. She was in tough shape, but we found her in the nick of time.

Watch our moving video to see Faye's happy ending -- then become a Humane Hero with your monthly donation to our 2010 Animal Survivors Fund.

Faye's a lucky survivor: She now sleeps in a warm bed in a safe place. To help save thousands of animals just like her in the new year, we're doing something we've never done before, and it's BIG: **We're hoping to raise a million dollars online by December 31 for our 2010 Animal Survivors Fund.**

It's ambitious -- but so are our plans for saving animals next year. We'll not only continue to help bust dogfighting rings, but we'll also take on the individuals and industries that profit from animal suffering -- from people who club baby seals to death, to those who confine animals in factory farms, to those who abuse dogs in puppy mills.

Your gift of \$20.10 a month for 2010 -- just 66 cents a day -- can help thousands of animals like Faye not just survive, but thrive in the new year. [Click here to watch Faye's video and make your tax-deductible monthly donation today.](#) Thank you for everything you do for animals.

Sincerely,

John Goodwin
Manager, Animal Fighting Campaign
The Humane Society of the United States

[Share on Facebook](#) [Share on Twitter](#) [Forward to a Friend](#)

Watch Faye's inspiring story.

[CLICK TO PLAY](#)

Then give just \$20.10 a month to save thousands of animals like her in 2010.

[WATCH THE VIDEO >](#)

Photo courtesy of [kcdogblog.com](#)

The [fundraising appeal from John Goodwin of the Humane Society of the United States](#) was ambitious. The goal was to raise one million dollars by month's end for dogs like "Faye," an abused fighting dog rescued in the largest bust of a dog fighting ring in U.S. history. According to Goodwin, "Faye" is now safe, in a loving home, recovering thanks to HSUS.

But none of it was true: the fundraising appeal was deliberately designed to mislead donors. HSUS was not involved in caring for "Faye." HSUS, in fact, predicted and suggested that dogs like "Faye" **should be killed**. In further fact, they could not even get her name right. And while Fay was being cared for, and needed surgery, the costs and care were being provided by [someone else](#).

[Kcdogblog.com](#) was the first to break the story:

Here's the rub. They're not caring for the vast majority (or any?) of the dogs that were rescued from the dog fighting ring bust from this summer...

It appears as if HSUS is trying to use the publicity from the *Time Magazine* article which referred to [one of the groups involved] as "the Humane Society" to raise money for dogs that aren't even in their care. This would not be the first time HSUS has pulled shenanigans in such a regard. Just two years ago, HSUS asked for money to care for the dogs rescued from Mike Vick's Bad Newz Kennels—when they as an organization were lobbying to have all the dogs killed.

[Petconnection.com](#) detailed the deceit even further:

The HSUS hasn't given one thin dime to help Fay (not Faye), according to her foster mom, who noted in the comments yesterday:

I am rather sad that HSUS has chosen to use Fay (not Faye) in their fund drive. Fay has never received a dime from HSUS. How do I know? Because I am the one that is fostering Fay. Fay is currently going through expensive surgeries to recreate medically need lips so her teeth do not fall out, her jaw bone stops deteriorating, and she can live a normal life. HSUS never contacted us regarding Fay. In the video John states she is in a loving home...really...thanks for the compliment but Fay is looking for her forever home.

Petconnection. com went on to say that the deceit was deliberate:

The HSUS knew. One figures they had a little pow-wow—lawyers, fund-raisers and accountants—and then did the math, figuring any howls of protest would be more than offset by the sight of a dog with her lips cut off by a dogfighter, and the number of people who'd click on that link and give, give, give.

In response to the criticism—on blogs, on twitter, including calls for a criminal investigation of HSUS—and with the memory of an investigation for fraud by the Louisiana and Mississippi Attorneys General for Hurricane Katrina fundraising still fresh, HSUS announced that they were going to give \$5,000 for Fay's surgery, ½ of 1% of what they hoped and expected to raise from the appeal. The effort was designed to quell some of the controversy, and while the money was needed, kcdogblog.com correctly **condemned it as too little** in an open letter to HSUS:

It is not enough to break up dog fighting rings and then leave the rehabilitation of the dogs to other organizations. The dogs need your help long after the fighting ring is broken up. And it is certainly not acceptable for you to raise money from people by making them think the money is going to the help "Animal Survivors" (it is even called the "Animal Survivor's Fund") when you're not caring for the animals—and when other organizations really need that money to help them. It is not enough to give money to one dog from the fight bust when hundreds of others need help.

And certainly, the other 99.5% of the goal—the \$995,000 they hope to raise off of "Faye"—should not go into HSUS coffers to pay for beachfront properties for HSUS executives, or any other historical HSUS spending patterns. But into the coffers of the nation's richest humane organization and—according to *Forbe's Magazine*—one of the nation's wealthiest charities, it will go.

Following the multi-state dog fighting bust in which Fay was rescued, I called on HSUS to cover the costs of the rescue, take over subsequent rehabilitation and care of the dogs, and ensure their subsequent placement. **I suggested HSUS put out the following statement:**

The Humane Society of the United States wants to assure everyone concerned over the fate of these dogs that we are doing everything in our power to provide unconditional love and the best care possible for the victims of these crimes. Their welfare is our utmost concern, and every action we take on their behalf will be guided by compassion for their plight, respect for the lives, and an unwavering commitment to ensuring we find them a safe, loving environment, in which to spend the rest of their lives. We know that rescue groups often have stretched resources. We know that shelters, like the Humane Society of Missouri, also have to care for the daily influx of dogs and cats in their shelter. So as the nation's largest, richest and most powerful animal protection organization, we are stepping up to the plate. If any rescue groups have the capacity to help, we'll welcome it. But rest assured: we will not allow a single one of these dogs to lose their lives. However long it takes, however much it costs, we will save all the puppies. We will save all the dogs. And if any are aggressive, we will undertake a comprehensive rehabilitation. That is our pledge to them. And that is our pledge to you.

That is what we all *should* have been told. That is what the dogs deserved. They didn't say this, of course. And they didn't do it. But they should have, instead of walking away. Instead of Pacelle saying what he did in fact say: that it was pretty clear *most of the dogs should be killed*. They did not go so far as they have in other cases, such as the Vick dogs and the **Wilkes County, North Carolina massacre**, in which HSUS *lobbied* the court to kill savable dogs. But after the initial publicity subsided, and except for some token efforts disproportionate to the need, HSUS walked away and left local groups in the lurch. To then turn around and try to raise \$1,000,000 off of their work through an intentionally misleading fundraising campaign that followed *Time Magazine's* coverage of the issue is, in my opinion, tantamount to fraud.

The Michael Vick Dog Fundraising Scam

Put an **END to ANIMAL FIGHTING**



Yes! I want to make a special gift to help The Humane Society of the United States care for the dogs seized in the Michael Vick case and to support other vital animal protection programs.

The HSUS has assisted federal authorities in the case against Michael Vick and his co-defendants, and is now overseeing the care of the 52 pit bulls seized from Vick's property in southwestern Virginia.



We desperately need your help to care for these dogs while the case is pending. Please donate today by completing the fields below. Your gift will be put to use right away to care for these dogs and to support all our vital animal protection programs. Thank you!

This dog was one of 52 pit bulls seized from Michael Vick's property. —Dogs now being cared for by The HSUS in cooperation with shelters. ©The HSUS

But the rabbit hole of deceit actually goes deeper, as kcdogblog reminded us over HSUS' **unconscionable fundraising by deceiving donors about the dogs abused by Michael Vick**, even as Pacelle was lobbying the court to kill them all. Petconnection.com also suggested that HSUS knew this current incident would draw protests but could be mollified by a small payout to quell the unrest. This type of dubious cost-benefit analysis should come as no surprise to anyone. This is a part of Wayne Pacelle's deliberate strategy to raise money for HSUS. And he has a long sordid history of high profile deceit of the public in order to separate them from their hard earned dollars.

As I reported in a blog, "**Dubious Deals at the HSUS**," back in 2008:

There is perhaps no better example of this than the misleading tactics used by HSUS to fundraise off of the Michael Vick dog fighting case. Shortly after the case broke, HSUS contacted the U.S. Attorney prosecuting Vick and asked if they could be "involved" and see the dogs (then being held at six animal control shelters in Virginia). The U.S. Attorney agreed but only on condition that they take no photographs and not publicly talk about the dogs (citing fears of compromising the case, sensitivities involved in the prosecution, and issues surrounding rules of evidence). HSUS agreed and then promptly violated that agreement. HSUS staffers took photographs of the dogs with people wearing "HSUS" shirts to make it appear that HSUS was directly involved in the case and their care.

They then sent out an appeal for money containing a photograph of someone wearing an HSUS shirt with one of the dogs. In the appeal, HSUS asks for money "to help The Humane Society of the United States care for the dogs seized in the Michael Vick case" and promises to take the money and "put [it] to use right away to care for these dogs." A caption underneath the photograph states: "This dog was one of 52 pit bulls seized from Michael Vick's property—dogs now being cared for by The HSUS..."

Wayne Pacelle himself reiterated this in his July 18, 2007 blog in which he stated that HSUS was "working with federal authorities from the start, and assisting with the care of 52 dogs taken from Vick's property."

The only problem with the appeal is that it wasn't really true. HSUS was not caring for the dogs as they claimed, they were not primarily looking for money to care for the dogs, and the money raised was not primarily going to be "put to use right away to care for these dogs."

And while the Federal Mail Fraud Statute (the oldest federal consumer protection statute in the United States) defines fraud as a scheme which uses the U.S. mail to obtain money by means of false or fraudulent representations, HSUS was careful to avoid it. Beneath the photograph with the dog and a person wearing an HSUS shirt is the statement that the dogs were being cared for by HSUS "and other shelters." In fact, it was "the other shelters" doing all the day-to-day caring.

The appeal also asked (twice) for money to help them care for the Vick dogs, but also "to support other... programs." In fact, aside from a few thousand dollars given to the shelters caring for the dogs out of the large sum purportedly raised, the funds raised from this appeal went ostensibly to these "other" programs. The Vick dog photograph, the talk of the Vick dogs, the part about caring for the Vick dogs was all part of the elaborate distraction. In reality, it was the "other" programs part that was operative...

Taking people's money under suspect pretenses is bad enough. Doing so at the expense of the dogs is simply unforgivable. Because HSUS violated the agreement with the U.S. Attorney, relations between the government agencies involved in the Vick prosecution and the humane movement were soured. According to humane participants in the case, HSUS's actions made it more difficult to work with the federal agencies, which now had reason to distrust

these organizations. The outcome could have been disastrous for the dogs had the government refused to work with all humane groups as a result.

No one—including Pacelle himself—would have likely lost any sleep over this because, in the end, HSUS itself lobbied the court to have all the dogs killed. According to Wayne Pacelle himself: “we have recommended to the [government] , and believe, the [dogs] will be eventually put down.”

The Hurricane Gustav Fundraising Scam

As the “Faye” appeal, the Vick dog appeal was also not an isolated incident, but part of a recurring pattern designed to misrepresent the truth and raise money off of the work of others. In 2008, MuttShack Rescue completed a large-scale rescue of animals in New Orleans because of Hurricane Gustav. Instead of supporting the effort, HSUS claimed the rescue as their own. According to MuttShack:

[We] just completed the largest animal evacuation in the history of New Orleans. After its completion, HSUS drove their trucks up in front of the whole deal, shot some footage and has posted it [on their website] as their own rescue.

HSUS then sent out another deceitful fundraiser asking people to donate to them because of *another organization’s* rescue.

Keeping Donors in the Dark

Kcdogblog.com was insightful when suggesting that HSUS was trying to capitalize by raising \$1,000,000 for a dog and dogs not even in their care after a *Time Magazine* article about the dogs hit newsstands, because the magazine referred to the local humane society simply as “the humane society.” In fact, that is exactly what HSUS does to divert money people intend to go to their local shelter to HSUS’ Washington D.C. coffers. (It is no coincidence that HSUS has chosen the name “humanesociety” rather than “HSUS” for their twitter name.) **For a not insignificant fee**, HSUS sells its donor list for one time use by shelters, but the list comes with caveats. In addition to others (such as not mailing it out until HSUS sent their appeal to those donors), the one primary stipulation is that:

In order to rent the list, you would need to submit the complete mail piece to the list owner for approval.

Over the years, the Nevada Humane Society has learned that people are often confused by fundraising appeals from HSUS. Local residents think they are donating to the local humane society when they give money to HSUS. In fact, NHS has been told by local residents that they have already donated to them, when in fact they gave to HSUS. This confusion goes beyond fundraising: NHS was publicly criticized for “embracing Michael Vick”—**which they did not**—because people thought HSUS (“the humane society”) was NHS. In order to clarify the confusion and to help raise funds for local programs, they tried to buy a list from HSUS to do so. And they submitted their proposed mailing for HSUS approval which **included the statement that:**

Nevada Humane Society is a nonprofit organization. We rely upon donations to make our lifesaving work possible. We do not receive funding from national groups or the government. Your contribution is tax-deductible. Please return this reply slip in the enclosed envelope to Nevada Humane Society. Thank you.

After doing so, HSUS denied the request, stating that unless NHS “remove[d] ‘national groups’ from this copy,” they could not use the list.



In other words, HSUS did not want NHS informing these individuals that when they give to groups like HSUS, they are not giving money to local lifesaving efforts. Put simply, HSUS was committed to keeping its supporters in the dark as

to where their money was going. Surprised, the leadership at NHS sent the following message to the HSUS representative:

Is HSUS really... deterring us from clarifying for donors how funds are used?

Does HSUS really wish to use the sale of their mailing list to control the messages of smaller humane organizations—those that are doing the work on the ground and struggling under the public misperception that if they give to a large national group that they are helping animals locally?

The answer was “yes.” Notwithstanding the *take it or leave it* response, NHS decided to remove the offending message and resubmit the fundraising appeal. But that was not enough. It did not matter if it was just on the appeal being used with the HSUS list, HSUS was insistent that this factually clarifying language had to be removed from *all* NHS mailings, even to those not involving HSUS mailing lists. Furthermore, NHS was told they had to agree to refrain from using it in *any* future communications to *anybody*, something NHS would not agree to do:

Are you asking us not to mail factual information that we are not funded by large national organizations to our own supporters?

Once again, the answer was “yes.” Conferring with HSUS officials, the HSUS list manager replied that it did not matter if the appeal involved HSUS lists or not, of if the appeals were “going to our names or otherwise—because you are mailing language that we do not approve, [HSUS] will not approve you. For that reason, NVHS has been denied.”

The Truth about HSUS Doesn't Sell

While HSUS raises the bulk of its donations on the backs of saving dogs and cats even though it does not operate shelters for dogs and cats or engage in rescue and placement of dogs and cats, it appears that it is willing to *suggest* to donors that it does and, as a condition for buying its mailing list, refuses to allow local organizations to clarify the misrepresentation. And they are not alone in suggesting this. The local humane society in Seattle cried foul when representatives of the ASPCA, a New York City-based organization, **allegedly went door to door fundraising in their community with dogs wearing “adopt me” vests**, designed to confuse people to think: the dogs were available for adoption and the ASPCA was involved in finding homes for dogs locally.

Why do they do this? In contrast to their own steadfast defense of killing and even while they work to undermine lifesaving efforts in local communities across the country, they know that these local groups are making a lifesaving difference for animals and that people love animals and would want to support it. And so they intentionally mislead the public into thinking that they are the ones saving these animals and, in the case of HSUS, they refuse to allow local shelters to clarify the misrepresentation. Because, in the end, if either Wayne Pacelle or Ed Sayres, the head of the ASPCA, had to rely on the truth: the **needless killing of Oreo**, the **Wilkes County massacre**, the **embrace of the most notorious dog abuser of our generation**, the **opposition to No Kill in San Francisco**, **undermining reform activists in Austin, Texas**, and other anti-animal practices, they would not be some of the wealthiest charities in the U.S.—the ASPCA also made the *Forbe's* list—they would be destitute. And neither Pacelle nor Sayres is willing to be truthful at that cost.