

I'm Bri, and you're listening to More than Meat. In this episode, we will be discussing lobbying in animal welfare legislation in the state of California. Who are the big players? What industries are being represented? Most importantly, is lobbying preventing the establishment of effective animal welfare legislation? Today we will be examining the different players that lobby for and against animal agriculture legislation. Many of the big players for animal welfare are names you would probably recognize - The Humane Society and ASPCA, among others. These organizations use advocacy, grassroots organizing, and other tools to work with legislators to promote protections for animals. After, we'll look at some of the industries that lobby against the creation of animal welfare legislation. These industries are grounded in economic interest, not ideology, an interesting dichotomy with the animal advocacy groups. Finally, we'll conclude with an evaluation of whether or not interests groups are preventing the establishment of effective animal agriculture legislation.

First, let's take a closer look at the advocacy groups dedicated to improving animal welfare. In the US, some of the main political advocacy groups promoting the implementation of stronger protections for animals are: The Humane Society, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and Mercy for Animals (Small White Filter 2006). For listeners who have been consistently tuning in, we have already introduced these groups in Episode One of our series. For new listeners, we recommend you tune in to Episode One to learn more about how these advocacy organizations frame the animal welfare initiatives they propose. The Humane Society is the nation's largest animal protection society, and leading animal advocacy organization (The Humane Society). The Humane Society runs campaigns to improve animal welfare, and utilizes public policy, corporate reform, and major campaigns to confront animal cruelty. The Humane Society also promotes grassroots organizing, and offers an "Advocate

Toolkit” to educate activists on how to attend town meetings, call elected officials, and pass a local ordinance. ASPCA is another organization that utilizes advocacy as a tool to promote animal welfare. The ASPCA works with local, state, and federal legislators to help enact protections for animals (ASPCA). They have campaigns aimed to protect pets, research animals, and animals farmed for human consumption. Mercy for Animals is another advocacy organization that utilizes undercover investigations, legal advocacy, corporate outreach, and education as strategies to advocate for animal welfare. Mercy for Animals uses shareholder resolutions, protests, petitions, and consultation research as mechanisms to improve protections for animals. These groups are grounded in their belief that animals suffer in factory farms and deserve better treatment, and they utilize ethics as an arguing point to improve the quality of life of animals raised for human consumption. They work with lawmakers and major companies to introduce stronger legal protections for animals raised for exploitation. Often, these groups band together to implement and endorse ballot initiatives. For example, Prevent Cruelty CA is a ballot initiative we introduced in Episode 5 of our series, which seeks to prevent animal cruelty and improve food safety by establishing that all eggs produced and sold in California must come from birds given one square foot of space each (The Humane Society 2017). This Prevent Cruelty CA initiative is driven by a coalition of animal advocacy groups that have garnered support from veterinary professionals, faith groups, food advocacy groups, and veterinary clinics. This initiative illustrates how animal advocacy groups work as a coalition to garner grassroots support and fight to get animal welfare legislation on the ballot.

On the flipside, there are powerful corporate interests that work to block the introduction of animal welfare legislation. Specifically, this episode is going to focus on Big Meat and the pharmaceutical industry.

Big Meat, or the global livestock and meat production and processing industries, have a strong vested interest in preventing the establishment of effective animal welfare legislation. To distinguish between the two, the livestock industry is composed of individual ranchers and the organizations that represent them. The meat production and processing industry is composed of companies that produce and sell meat and poultry as well as processed meats. It's understandable that these groups would be opposed to the implementation of new animal welfare laws, the livestock industry is setting out to make as much money as possible, and implementing new standards to protect animal wellbeing is costly and less efficient than the current industrialized model. Laws that call for stronger protections for animals can increase the cost of animal products. For example, a law passed in California in 2014 that called for more space for egg-laying hens resulted in an 18% increase in the cost of price for eggs (Kaiser 2016). Since this cost is passed on to consumers, it may sway demand and lead in an ultimate loss for producers.

The livestock and meat production and processing industries lobby against the creation of stronger animal welfare laws. According to Center for Responsive Politics, the meat production and processing industry fundraised \$4,861,000, and donated \$389,500 to Congress specifically. The livestock industry donated even more, fundraising \$3,656,000 and donating \$2,439,000 to Congress in the 2017-2018 election cycle. Some of the most prominent meat lobbyists are National Pork Producers Council, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, and Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund. These groups are powerful trade organizations and lobbying groups that are committed to improving business for cattle ranchers and meat

producers. They do this through lobbying against stronger regulations, which animal welfare is included.

In an article published by Kendal Frazier, the CEO of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, animal welfare advocacy groups are framed as the antithesis to economic growth. Frazier claims that organizations like The Humane Society are raising millions for anti-agriculture ballot initiatives, and its singular goal is to put cattlemen out of business. Groups like the National Cattlemen's Beef Association see animal welfare laws as regulations that interfere with the free market and threaten the economic livelihood of meat producers. Lobbying groups in the meat industry gather support from producers who fear that new animal welfare requirements will threaten business. This framing is a barrier to effective animal welfare legislation because lobbying organizations are perpetuating a narrative that animal welfare regulations are an impediment to economic growth.

Lobbying from the meat industry has implications that extend beyond animal welfare. The meat industry has been able to successfully silence the voices of meat industry workers by lobbying for "ag gag laws". "Ag gag laws" make it illegal for workers to take undercover photos and videos in production facilities (CSRWire 2012). These laws currently exist in six states: Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and North Dakota. These laws criminalize documentation of animal and worker abuse in confined animal feeding operations. "Ag gag" laws prevent investigators, journalists, and activists from reporting animal abuses, unsanitary conditions, or worker abuse without facing a large fine. "Ag gag" bills have drawn inspiration from model legislation drafted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a conservative think tank. In 2002, ALEC drafted the Animal and Ecological Terrorism Act, which

classifies people who film animal operations “terrorists” and criminalizes video and photographic recordings (Plagakis 2014). Through “ag gag” laws, industry has been able to successfully influence legislators to prioritize profit over animal welfare and consumer health and safety. Silencing the voices the whistleblowers makes it difficult to educate the public and legislators on animal and labor abuses in the livestock industry. “Ag gag” laws are definitely a barrier to the creation of effective animal welfare legislation.

The pharmaceutical industry also has a large stake in animal agriculture legislation, especially as it relates to antibiotic use in the livestock industry. As we explored in Episode Three of our series, a majority of antibiotics on the market today are being used in animal agriculture. Antibiotics are injected into animals and added to feed to promote growth. Ample antibiotics are also used preventatively to protect animals from diseases associated with their cramped conditions. This has led to a host of problems related to antibiotic resistance and superbugs. Since 70% of antibiotics on the market are designated for animal agriculture, the pharmaceutical industry has a huge stake in the livestock industry.

Heavy lobbying from the pharmaceutical industry has allowed livestock producers to retain the right to medicate livestock. There have been multiple attempts to restrict the administration of antibiotics to livestock for growth and disease prevention purposes. An article by Amy Nordum in the International Business Times identifies three proposed bills to reduce antibiotic use in animal agriculture from 2013 - 2015 that were shot down by lobbying from the pharmaceutical industry. In 2013, Representative Louise Slaughter introduced Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act of 2013, which aimed to preserve the effectiveness of medically important antimicrobials used in the treatment of animal and human diseases by regulating non

therapeutic uses. In 2015, Feinstein introduced Preventing Antibiotic Resistance Act that aimed to prevent farmers from administering antibiotics for preventive reasons. Congressman Waxman proposed a bill called Delivering Antimicrobial Transparency in Animals Act of 2013 which have required pharmaceutical companies to report data about how antibiotics are used on farms. All three of these bills were shot down, likely due to strong lobbying from the pharmaceutical industry. In 2013 and 2014, pharmaceutical companies opposed to these bills spent \$14.3 million lobbying. The pharmaceutical industry channels money to members of Congress who serve on committees that determine whether to proceed with bills imposing stricter regulations on antibiotics. This illustrates a barrier to establishing effective animal welfare legislation.

Lobbying represents a very powerful barrier to the establishment of stronger animal welfare legislation. This has very significant implications for animal welfare, livestock industry workers, and human health. Arguably, the industry players have more influence than the animal welfare advocacy groups. While animal advocacy groups use tactics like grassroots organizing and legal support to promote animal welfare legislation, they cannot stack up against the large corporate players donating millions of dollars to lobby against the creation of stronger animal welfare laws. Political action committees with corporate support from the meat and pharmaceutical industry channel millions of dollars to legislators to block stronger laws. This has implications for animal welfare, industry workers, and human health. When the meat and livestock industry lobby for “ag gag” laws that make whistleblowing illegal, they make it impossible to address animal welfare, labor violations, and safety violations taking place in livestock production facilities. Likewise, pharmaceutical lobbying makes it challenging for legislators to address the rampant issue of antibiotic misuse in animal agriculture that is causing the emergence of antibiotic resistant superbugs that pose a huge threat to human health. These

barriers are maintaining the existing power structures in animal agriculture and illustrate how the existing system is failing. Even if advocacy groups gain traction, their goals will be shut down by the funds that the meat and pharmaceutical industries are channeling into politics, making it difficult to establish legislative improvements for animal welfare that would aid workers rights and human health.

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