



**VOTERS FOR
ANIMAL RIGHTS**

786 Jefferson Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11221
vfar.org

2020 New York State Senate & Assembly Election Questionnaire

About Us

Launched in 2017, Voters For Animal Rights (VFAR) is a New York based 501c(4) grassroots multi-issue animal advocacy organization that is building political power for animals. In 2019, VFAR led the successful campaign to ban foie gras in NYC, and to stop wild bird poaching. We also led the campaign to ban the use of wild animals in circuses in NYC. We look forward to working with you to win more victories for animals and make the state of New York a leader in compassionate public policy.

Our mission is to elect candidates who support animal protection, lobby for stronger laws to stop animal cruelty, and hold elected officials accountable to humane voters. VFAR mobilizes public concern for animals through the political process. We know that animal protection is not only a moral issue but a bi-partisan political issue as well. Over 90% of Americans believe that animals need protection from abuse and exploitation. To that end, we organize humane voters to support candidates that care about animals. If you support animals, then we want to support you! There are over 60,000 humane voters throughout New York state, hundreds of which are volunteers for VFAR who are ready to knock on doors, make phone calls and get out the vote to elect people who will stand up for animals. We deliver the vote – for the animals and for you.

As an example, here is our [animal-friendly voter guide](#) from the 2019 NYC Special Election for Public Advocate.

Endorsement Process

Candidates seeking our endorsement for the New York State Assembly and Senate are **required** to fill out this questionnaire and submit to woof@vfar.org by **June 1, 2020**. *Please let us know if you need more time.*

Questions

If you have any questions about the topics in our questionnaire, please don't hesitate to reach out to allie@vfar.org and david@vfar.org. We are happy to help you better understand animal protection policy, and we're happy to advise your campaign.

Allie Feldman Taylor, David Karopkin, Esq., Julie Cappiello, Joyce Friedman, Heather Greenhouse, Kathy Nizzari, Michelle Aptman

Board of Directors, Voters For Animal Rights



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Candidate Contact Information & Campaign Information

Candidate Name	Pronouns	Cell Phone	Email
Laura Ahearn	She/Her/Hers	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

GC/Campaign Manager	Pronouns	Cell Phone	Email
Jon Yedin	He/Him/His	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

District: NYS Senate District 1

Party: Democratic

Office Sought: Senate

Name of Campaign Committee

Campaign Field Office Address

Campaign Website

Personal Initiatives

1. Do you feel that promoting the humane treatment of animals should be a priority for the New York State Legislature?

Absolutely

2. Do you have any achievements to date on humane issues, e.g. supporting humane legislation, adopting a shelter pet, volunteering with an animal rescue organization, supporting any national or local animal protection orgs, living a plant-based (vegan or vegetarian) lifestyle, etc.? Did you grow up with or currently live with any companion animals?

There is a strong connection between child abuse, domestic violence and animal abuse. I worked with our local ASPCA at my Rape Crisis Center/Crime Victims Center and created an educational program aimed at teaching the warning signs to prevent abuse. I advocated successfully with the landlord of my building to permit me to allow *Jack the Handsome Havenese* to work at the Rape Crisis Center/Crime Victims Center. I am strongly committed to allowing dogs and other animals in the workplace when appropriate as I feel they create a healthy and happy environment.

Throughout my life I have adopted shelter dogs and cats or brought stray dogs into my forever home. Dogs have been an integral part of my life and helped support me emotionally as a child when I endured domestic violence in my home. Prior to a medical event my mother was very involved in capturing Ferrell cats and spaying/neutering them and I provided financial support for those efforts



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(she adopted 6 of those cats and I help care for them). I donated to a local shelter and have bequeathed a portion of my estate to that shelter.

3. What animal issues will you prioritize and lead on as a member of the NYS legislature?

- 1- Strengthening Animal Cruelty Laws.
- 2- Ban the sale of animal tested cosmetics
- 3- Enforce the ban of use of wild animals in circuses
- 4- Ban slaughterhouses anywhere within NYC limits.
- 5- Create a NY Department of Animal Protection
- 6- Ban the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits in pet stores.
- 7- Ban the sale of animal fur.

I'm very supportive of all of your efforts.

4. Will you commit to having a designated person in your office to handle animal issues?

Absolutely

5. How would you work to empower the animal advocacy community to reach new success and growth into the 2020-2022 term, and ensure that New York is on the forefront of animal protection?

You have my commitment to work with animal rights groups like yours to educate the community through outreach efforts which will include engaging the media, community organizations, the public, and other stakeholders.

Positions on Legislation and Policy

1. Companion Animals: Pet Stores

With thousands of homeless animals waiting for loving forever homes in shelters and rescues all over New York State, why should pet stores and breeders be allowed to profit off the backs of animals? The puppy and kitten mill/pet store connection create lives of misery from beginning to end. Breeding facilities and pet stores have repeatedly been found to have poor sanitation, infectious disease, animals overcrowded in cages with no exercise, lack of proper veterinary care, lack of protection from harsh weather conditions, and lack of adequate food and water. These conditions result in great suffering, and many sick animals are sold to unaware consumers. [More info here.](#)

Would you cosponsor and vote for S4234A/A6298A (Gianaris / Rosenthal) which would ban the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in pet stores unless they come from a shelter or rescue?

YES



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Additional Comments:

I have spoken with Senator Genaris about this legislation and support it.

2. Animals Used for Fashion: Fur

Fur farms breed and confine animals in tiny, filthy cages where they suffer intense stress and unimaginable cruelty. They are beaten, bludgeoned, electrocuted, and skinned alive. Trapping animals in the wild is no better — animals are trapped in cruel leg hold traps where they can suffer for days in excruciating pain — starving, until a trapper returns to shoot or bludgeon them to death. Coyotes are known to attempt to chew off their own legs trying to break free. Many other animals are unintentionally caught and killed in these traps, including household pets. California has enacted a ban on the sale of fur. Several countries such as Norway, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, and the U.K. have taken steps to close fur farms. With public awareness and innovative alternatives on the rise, many popular designers have stopped using all animal fur. There are ethical alternatives to fur which are not only stylish and warm but environmentally friendly. More info [here](#).

Would you cosponsor and vote for A5040 (Rosenthal), that would ban the sale of new apparel products using real animal fur?

YES

Additional Comments:

I support a ban on new apparel products using real animal fur.

3. Animals Used in Entertainment

A. Rodeo Cruelty

While New York State has limited the use of animals in circuses and other entertainment, rodeos have been left unregulated despite the display of similar, and in many cases more egregious, acts of cruelty. Rodeos typically include an event called "calf roping" where [baby calves are shocked with electric prods](#), forcing them to run as soon as the holding chute opens, only to be "clotheslined" with a rope and tied at the legs. Panicked calves are routinely injured or killed during these performances. Rodeos also continue to use flank straps or bucking straps, which are tightly fastened around the animal's abdomen and may be used with sharp-ened spurs to cause pain to the animal, encouraging them to buck more violently. Rodeos are responsible for causing death or serious injury to countless animals, all for the sole purpose of entertainment and showmanship.

Would you cosponsor and vote for A8554/S7971 (Rosenthal/Addabbo) which would prohibit these practices at rodeos?

YES

Additional Comments: This is horrific and I will support legislation prohibiting these practices.



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B. Animal Circuses

Circuses that use animals have been cited as a source of cruelty and exploitation for animals. Even if the basic levels of care and protection that the federal Animal Welfare Act demands are met, circuses force wild animals to languish in cages while travelling from performance to performance, without ever having the opportunity to exercise natural behaviors. Worse, time after time we see reports of [circus animals being beaten and whipped](#), having their limbs tied together to facilitate training, being shocked to ensure compliance, not being provided with adequate food, water and shelter, and other instances of cruelty.

Would you cosponsor and vote for A3673/S7971 (Englebright/Martinez) which would prohibit the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation from issuing permits or licenses that would authorize wild animals to appear in circuses?

YES

I am fully supportive of legislative measures that would prohibit the use of wild animals in circuses and any additional legislation needed to prohibit cruelty to any animal used in a circus.

C. Carriage Horses

Advocates have long called out the poor working and living conditions for horses used for NYC carriage rides. As recently as March 2020, a 12-year-old horse was euthanized after [collapsing in Central Park](#), a tragic incident that was captured on video camera by a horrified pedestrian. Despite improvements implemented over the years, these horses are still forced to travel through NYC traffic to get to and from Central Park, they work long days sometimes in extreme weather conditions, with no opportunity for daily turnout. Over the course of the past three decades, there have been countless incidents and accidents involving New York City carriage horses and many have died on the streets of NYC or been sent to slaughter once they are unable to continue working.

Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation to ban horse carriages in New York City?

YES

Additional Comments:

If there is resistance in passing this legislation I will work with you to craft legislation that would ensure stricter regulations for working and living conditions.

4. Animals Used for Experimentation: School Hatching Projects

Principals and school teachers should end the use of bird-hatching projects and replace them with learning activities that teach life processes without the use of live animals. School classroom incubation and hatching projects of baby chicks and ducks is cruel and leads to the abandonment and death of countless young birds each year. Once the eggs develop and the cute baby birds grow up, schools realize that they have no plan for the adult birds. These hatching-project birds are deprived of a mother hen. The birds are often abandoned in



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city parks where they cannot survive on their own or dumped at local animal shelters and rescues who are already overburdened with unwanted animals. Hatching projects encourage the view that animals are disposable objects instead of living creatures requiring a lifetime of care and commitment. Humane alternatives have been developed by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), HEART, and humane educators. More info can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

For Assembly candidates: Would you cosponsor and vote A0058 (Rosenthal) that would prohibit schools from using eggs, live baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects?

For Senate candidates: Would you introduce or cosponsor legislation a senate version of A0058 that would prohibit schools from using eggs, live baby chickens and ducks for classroom projects?

YES

Additional Comments:

If there is resistance in passing this legislation initially I will work with you to require that permits be obtained for bird hatching projects. Permits would only be granted if the applicant had a written agreement from a farm animal sanctuary or wildlife preserve that the hatched birds would have a forever home.

5. Factory Farms, Live Animal Slaughter Markets and Transportation

There are more than [600 factory farms](#) in New York State, confining animals and engaging in heinously cruel practices such as castration of pigs, cows, and other mammals without painkillers, “debeaking” or “beak cutting” of chickens and turkeys without painkillers, confinement of egg-laying hens in battery cages, confinement of baby cows in veal crates, and confinement of pigs in gestation crates. These factory farms are degrading the environment and poisoning our communities.

There are also [80+ slaughterhouses and live animal markets in NYC](#), in all five boroughs – more than any other U.S. city. These facilities in New York are no different than the live animal markets abroad where Coronavirus started. In addition to brutally cruel treatment of the animals (tiny cages, no vet care, severely limited food and water), these storefront facilities pose a significant health and safety hazard to the community affecting the quality of life for neighborhood residents. Blood, feces, urine, dismembered body parts, and feathers are routinely found on our public sidewalks and streets due to the unsanitary conditions associated with storefront slaughterhouses. They are also a breeding ground for infectious diseases — avian flu has been found in many NYC live animal markets. Many of these slaughterhouses are located close to schools and playgrounds. Additionally, when large animals such as cows, bulls, and goats escape (as routinely happens), including during transport, it puts us all in danger, even causing a [multi-hour traffic jam on the Verrazano Bridge](#). Sometimes these animals are allowed to be rescued by a farm animal sanctuary but most often they are killed.

Especially in light of pandemics that originate from crowded, unsanitary live animal markets, would you support a permanent ban on the operation of all factory farms? Would you support legislation A10399 (Sepulveda/Rosenthal) that would ban the operation of live animal markets in New York City?



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YES

Additional Comments: I am supportive of any legislation which will prohibit the cruelty of animals.

Would you cosponsor and vote for legislation to ban confining animals and other cruel practices such as (a) castration of pigs, cows, and other mammals without painkillers, (b) “debeaking” or “beak cutting” of chickens and turkeys without painkillers, (c) confinement of egg-laying hens in battery cages, confinement of baby cows in veal crates, and (d) confinement of pigs in gestation crates?

YES

Additional Comments: I am supportive of any legislation which will prohibit the cruelty of animals.

S6252/A8009 (Gianaris/Weprin) is legislation that would renew the state moratorium prohibiting new licenses for slaughter facilities in NYC. It has passed both houses. Will you reach out to Governor Cuomo and ask him to sign the bill?

YES

Additional Comments:

Would you cosponsor, support and vote for legislation to require that any animal who escapes a slaughterhouse or transport vehicle be released to an animal sanctuary or other rescue?

YES

Additional Comments:

6. Food and Health

A. Dairy Subsidies and transition to plant-based suppliers in New York State

Milk and other dairy products are top agricultural products in New York State, but demand for and sales of dairy products in the U.S. have dropped precipitously in recent years, while sales of non-dairy milks have grown substantially. This change comes as more research and information illuminate the harmful effects of dairy on adult and children’s health, the environment and animal welfare. Regardless, the quality of individual animal care offered by a given farm, dairy production necessarily involves farmers taking newborn calves from their mothers, who bellow and chase after them. Instead of a mother’s milk going to her babies, her calves are taken to veal farms where they are kept isolated in small plastic huts in rows upon rows. Perhaps worst is that forcibly impregnating, tail docking, and beating downed cows are standard practices on NY dairy farms. Former dairy companies like long-time New York producers like Elmhurst Dairy are making the switch to non-



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dairy products. New York based companies offering healthy food, yet every year taxpayers subsidize New York's dairies with as much as \$60 million in credits.

Would you support ending or reducing the immense subsidies that New York provides dairy farmers, and reallocating them to plant-based initiatives?

YES / NO – Maybe - I do support funding plant based initiatives.

Additional Comments: I am supportive of funding plant based initiatives on their own merits but do not believe they should take away from another budget to be funded. I also support any legislation which will prohibit the cruelty of animals.

B. Food Labeling

Would you support legislation to require that any food products sold in New York must be labeled with information detailing the sourcing of the animals and the conditions the animals were raised in and requiring restaurants provide such signage?

YES

Additional Comments: I believe that we can gain the public's support in protecting animals more effectively if they understood just how much suffering animals endure. This is a great idea and I am supportive.

7. Protecting New York's Wildlife

A. Wildlife Killing Contests

Animal killing competitions are publicly held contests where the person or team who has killed the most animals, or the heaviest or largest animals is crowned the winner. In animal killing competitions, individuals compete to kill the most animals, the heaviest animal, or the largest animal. [Competitions such as these are inhumane and provide incentive to killing animals for glory, prizes or titles.](#) In many cases, these competitions are conducted in a party-like atmosphere and are more like slaughters or massacres and are unsportsmanlike. These competitions are considered cruel by many hunters.

Would you cosponsor and vote for [A.9775/S.4253B](#) and [A.722B/S.7542](#) (Glick / Martinez) to ban killing contests in New York State?

YES

Additional Comments:



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B. Wildlife Management

New York is home to an immense diversity of wildlife, whether in urban, suburban or rural areas. Even New York City's five boroughs are home to hundreds of species, including geese, deer, squirrels, ducks, raccoons, opossum, coyotes, hawks, eagles, whales, dolphins, seals, turkeys, beavers, bats, pigeons, rats, migratory birds, and so many more species. While many animals inhabit New York year-round, other species pass through on their annual migrations. USDA Wildlife Services is a federal agency notorious for exterminating millions of wild animals across the country in cruel manners, while ignoring and undermining humane approaches to coexisting with wildlife in New York. Examples of humane wildlife management practices include: Instead of killing Canada geese to reduce the threat of "bird strikes", nests are now being treated as a birth control method. In Staten Island, a deer vasectomy program was instituted as a more humane and effective approach to stabilizing the population, and turkeys were relocated to a sanctuary in upstate New York to avoid being slaughtered.

Do you support New York City's [WildlifeNYC program](#), aimed to promote awareness, tolerance, coexistence, and understanding of urban wildlife? If you don't represent NYC, would you support a similar program for your district? How do you view our relationship to wildlife in New York State?

YES

Additional Comments: I believe WildlifeNYC's efforts to promote conservation and coexistence between humans and wildlife through public policy, responsible management plans, and educational initiatives is a model that can be used throughout New York State.

In 2014, the New York State Department of Environmental Protection (DEC) declared, with no public input in support, and no clear scientific basis, that mute swans are an invasive species in New York, and soon thereafter proposed eliminating all mute swans in New York.

Would you support legislation reversing the New York State DEC's determination that mute swans are an invasive and prohibited species in New York, and allow mute swans to continue to exist?

YES

Additional Comments:

Do you oppose lethal management initiatives for "nuisance" wildlife such as Canada geese, deer and turkey populations that result in the cruel and needless killing of these animals in New York's parks by government contractors particularly where there are demonstrated non-lethal and humane alternatives that can be applied?

YES

Additional Comments: I support any legislation which prohibits the cruel and needless killing of animals.



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Currently there are few brick and mortar wildlife rehabilitation centers in New York State, such as the Wild Bird Fund in Manhattan. Would you support funding initiatives to expand New York State's capacity for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation?

YES

Additional Comments: I fully support the expansion of these programs.



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8. Legal Rights for Animals

In 2018, in a decision denying a habeas corpus claim brought on behalf of [two chimpanzees who had been kept for decades in small cages in a warehouse](#), Justice Eugene M. Fahey of the New York Court of Appeals issued a concurring opinion stating the following:

“To treat a chimpanzee as if he or she had no right to liberty protected by habeas corpus is to regard the chimpanzee as entirely lacking independent worth, as a mere resource for human use, a thing the value of which consists exclusively in its usefulness to others.... While it may be arguable that a chimpanzee is not a “person,” there is no doubt that it is not merely a thing.

Do you believe that any animals should have an individual legal right to bodily liberty, and if so, would you support legislation that establishes such a right?

YES

Additional Comments: I would support measures and any legislation which will prohibit cruelty to animals and believe this will help strengthen existing laws.

05/27/2020

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE

DATE