

2021 Nassau County District Attorney Endorsement 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 2020, VFAR helped elect our former board member, Jabari Brisport, to the New York State Senate. In 2019, VFAR led the successful campaign to ban foie gras in NYC, to stop wild bird poaching and to establish an Office of Animal Welfare within the Mayor's Office. In 2017 we 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 New York City 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 2020 NYS Primary Elections.

Endorsement Process

Candidates seeking VFAR's endorsement for the 2021 Nassau County District Attorney election are required to fill out this questionnaire, which will be posted on our website.

Questions

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

Candidate Contact Information & Campaign Information

Candidate Name	Todd Kaminsky	Pronouns	he/him/his	Cell Phone
	Email			

info@toddkaminsky.com

Campaign Manager Whitney Ralston Pronouns she/her/hers Cell Phone Email

Neighborhoods In Your District Nassau County

Party Democrat Office Sought Nassau District Attorney

Name of Campaign Committee: Kaminsky for Nassau

Campaign Field Office Address: 100 Garden City Plaza, Suite 115, Garden City NY 11530

Campaign Website: toddkaminsky.com

Social Media Handles (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram): @toddkaminsky

Occupation/Employer: State Senator

Organizational Affiliations (if any):

Endorsements (if any):

North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, Planned Parenthood Empire Actions, Moms Demand Action, Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, NYS Comptroller DiNapoli, John Feal and dozens more.

Personal Initiatives

1. Do you feel that promoting the humane treatment of animals should be a priority for the Nassau County District Attorney's Office?

Yes.

2. What achievements or advocacy for animals are you most proud of, e.g. supporting humane legislation, adopting a shelter pet, volunteering with an animal rescue organization, supporting any national or local animal protection organizations, living a plant-based (vegan or vegetarian) lifestyle, etc.?

Supporting and carrying humane legislation, including legislation to require those mandated to report child abuse, to also report animal cruelty, abuse, or neglect. I am also proud of the Senate for passing legislation to end the puppy mill pipeline. The conditions at these puppy mill businesses are

sickening and it creates an unsafe environment for pets and patrons, and I know we must end this horrible practice to make sure animals are kept safe and healthy conditions.

3. What animal issues will you prioritize and lead on as District Attorney? How would you work to empower the animal advocacy community to reach new success and growth into the 2022-2025 term, and ensure that New York is on the forefront of animal protection?

Dog fighting is a billion-dollar, underground industry within the United States, composed of promoters, breeders, trainers, and sellers. Money is not only made by wages on the outcomes of fights, but also through the illicit breeding, marketing, trading, and sale of dogs. On Long Island, law enforcement has busted a multitude of dog fighting operations yet because we keep seeing them pop up, more must be done to hold these criminals accountable and to finally put a stop to these disturbing practices. I will not hesitate to pursue these barbaric and cruel dog fighting rings.

I also think we need to bring more attention to animal abandonment issues seeing as there was a spike in adoptions during the pandemic, yet now that we are coming out of it, many owners are abandoning their pandemic pets.

I will partner with local animal groups to ensure Nassau Residents know their -- and their pets -- rights.

4. Do you have, or would you consider developing, a platform on animal protection issues and posting the information onto your campaign website to outline your positions? If you receive an endorsement from VFAR, will you promote our endorsement on your website and social media pages?

Yes, and yes.

5. Do you believe that the pursuit of animal rights is part of a broader vision of social justice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, because first of all, violence or abuse against any living creature should not be tolerated. It is also important to pursue animal rights since research shows there is a direct link between acts of cruelty to animals and violence towards humans - be it child abuse, domestic abuse, or other violent crimes. I also believe it is important to provide a voice for the voiceless by standing up to injustices. By creating an environment where laws are enforced equally for those without power, we will create a more just community. As a DA I will use my position to ensure marginalized groups, even animals, can live in a safe environment.

Staffing

6. Will you commit to creating an [Animal Cruelty Prosecutions Unit](#) (like that of the Queen's County District Attorney's Office)? Will you appoint animal rights advocates as Assistant District Attorneys in your office to carry out your agenda and policies relating to law enforcement of crimes against animals?

This unit already exists in Nassau County. I will not only keep the unit, but I work to expand it by allocating more funds and hiring ADAs who specialize in animal abuse.

Policy Positions

The Nassau County District Attorney is uniquely positioned to advance animal welfare across the country and restore New York City's legacy as the epicenter of animal protection in the United States. In the nineteenth century, prosecutions targeting cruel *business practices* inflicted on *farm animals* in New York City established the modern field of animal cruelty law that is now a fundamental component of legal systems around the world. However, in recent years, animal cruelty prosecutions in New York have almost exclusively targeted *individual acts* of cruelty to *companion animals*, while allowing well-funded corporations and executives to get away with systematic animal abuse on an industrial scale. VFAR believes that the Nassau County District Attorney's Office needs to return to New York City's roots and prioritize combating the systemic causes of animal cruelty over the incarceration of individual perpetrators (who are often themselves victims of poverty or mental illness). Companies and corporate executives that cause or permit acts of animal cruelty in their operations or supply chains can be held accountable by Nassau County prosecutors, even if that cruelty occurs outside of Nassau County. It is time for New York City prosecutors to once again use the full extent of their law enforcement authority to change the world for animals.

Question 1

What are examples of animal abuse which you believe should be a focus for the attention of the task force and your office?

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I also think we need to bring more attention to animal abandonment issues seeing as there was a spike in adoptions during the pandemic, yet now that we are coming out of it, many owners are abandoning their pandemic pets. This is why I will work with local animal groups to help educate individuals about the importance of continuing to care for a pet after adoption.

Question 2

What is the appropriate law enforcement and punitive response to cruelty to companion animals such as domestic torture or violence, dog fighting, tethering, abandonment of dogs in hot cars and cold weather, and other neglect?

Animal abuse is often a sign of a larger abuse of animals and humans. My office will look at everything on a case by case issue and root out the underlying problem so animals and humans aren't harmed in the future.

Question 3

Many meat, dairy, and egg products are marketed as “natural” and “humane” despite being produced through cruel industrial farming practices including the life-long indoor confinement of animals; mutilations (e.g., castration, debeaking, dehorning etc.); and the widespread use of antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals.

1. Do you believe that reasonable consumers are likely to be misled by the marketing of products produced through industrial farming practices? If so, will you prosecute companies that falsely market their products in violation of statutes that prohibit false and misleading advertising? If not, why not?

Yes, consumers depend on labels and markings on their products to make safe and informed decisions. However, I am not surprised if certain companies would take advantage of this through deceptive labeling practices - we have seen it before with organic labels and even recycling. As District Attorney, if my office receives any complaints or information of entities engaging in deceptive practices, or any other crimes related to animal rights, I will ensure they are held accountable.

2. If you were District Attorney, how would your office utilize false advertising or securities fraud laws to address animal cruelty, whether within New York or beyond its borders? Are there other legal tools you would seek to utilize?

Many well-intentioned consumers are concerned about where their food comes from and are looking for better options when purchasing items such as eggs, milk, and meat products. Labels such as free-range, grass-fed, and organic signal to a regular consumer that a product comes from a more humane source, yet if that is not the case, and a business is knowingly using these labels to mislead shoppers, they must be held accountable. New York has laws regarding false advertising - under the general business law and penal law - which can be used to prosecute businesses taking advantage of consumers.

Question 4

How would you seek to enforce animal cruelty laws that pertain to enterprises within Nassau County, which use and/or commoditize animals or products derived from animals kept within Nassau County, such as failing to provide animals food and water, adequate space, tethering, or leaving animals outside in extreme weather (i.e. heat or freezing weather)?

Nassau County already has a local law regarding tethering, which prioritizes animal safety while outdoors and also limits their exposure to harsh conditions. Therefore, I will work to educate residents about this law - along with how to properly provide animals with a safe and healthful environment - and if animals are mistreated, my office will enforce the current law.

Question 5

New York State's Animal Cruelty Statute (Article 26 of the New York Agriculture and Markets Law) prohibits acts that cause "unjustifiable physical pain, suffering or death" to animals. Yet, New York's animal cruelty laws have rarely been enforced in cases beyond abuse of domestic and companion animals.

VFAR believes the cruel practices listed below may be considered unlawful under New York's animal cruelty laws and can be prosecuted, however, rarely are these violations of the animal cruelty statutes taken into consideration by District Attorneys. Please place a checkmark next to any of the practices you believe are prohibited and would seek to investigate or prosecute under current New York Law:

- [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](#)
- [Force-feeding of ducks or geese for foie gras production](#)
- [Boiling lobsters and other crustaceans while alive](#)
- [Confinement of pigs in gestation crates](#)

For any of the practices you identified as prohibited in your answer in Part A, above, will you seek to enforce animal cruelty laws against and prosecute companies and executives that cause such cruelty to occur? If not, why not?

First, I believe our animal cruelty laws must be updated, which is why I voted in support of legislation to remove the term "serious" in regards to a physically injured animal to ensure a perpetrator's attempt to harm an animal is penalized appropriately despite the success of the said assault. However, even without changing the law, I will investigate any of the practices identified above.

Question 6

What is your position on the intersection of animal cruelty and justice reform? What is your vision for a restorative justice approach to animal cruelty?

Often times those who inflict pain on animals are deeply struggling with other underlying issues. We must protect those animals, while offering services and care for the humans who cause the pain. My unit will intervene early when so violence is prevented and de-escalated for both humans and animals.

Question 7

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 nonhuman animals have legal rights? How would your office vindicate or advance the legal rights of animals?

Animals should have legal rights and we must take into consideration the best interest of an animal when enforcing laws that impact them. My office will view an animal’s legal rights as more than just a piece of property because they are living things that have the capacity for feelings.

Additional Comments (if any):

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE

DATE