

# Voters Question Santorium's Ties To HSU And 'Consistent Conservative' Label



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The crowd was already primed with an eloquent prayer and soulful renditions of "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful" when former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum cruised into Osage Beach, MO (pop. 4,700) last week, hoping to rally voters who could perhaps provide the delegates he needs to win the GOP presidential nomination.

Santorum has criss-crossed Rural America dozens of times, delivering his well-honed lines about faith, values and returning America to greatness. Most of his attack lines focus on doing away with President Barack Obama's health care law, which he calls "Obamacare" and the importance of "turning Washington around" and "shrinking the size of government." But Santorum is increasingly taking shots at GOP frontrunner Mitt Romney, pointing out that he is the "consistent conservative" on issues like right to life, marriage, and smaller government.

"I've never been for big government solutions to our problems," he told the almost 700 people gathered in a music hall in this rural summer resort town. "Americans are not used to being straddled with the yoke of government."

Nowhere does this sentiment ring truer than on farms and ranches across this country, where families would be quite content to raise their crops and livestock without constant interference from government regulators or activist organizations. So as prospective voters take a more critical look at his voting record, many are surprised to learn that his conservative record is a very mixed bag, especially when it comes to his relationship with the Humane Society of the U.S. (HSUS).

When Sen. Santorum was running for re-election in 2006, one of his biggest advocates was the Humane Society Legislative Fund (HSLF), a 501-C4 charity which is a lobbying arm of HSUS. In an October 2006 press release, HSLF said it based the endorsement on Santorum's "long-standing record of support for animal welfare, his active leadership on humane issues, and his tangible record of success on these issues."

"There is no stronger animal welfare advocate in Congress than Senator Santorum," said Sara Amundson, executive director of the Humane Society Legislative Fund. "Santorum has been one of our most determined and effective leaders in fighting for public policies to halt cruelty and abuse. In order to pass humane laws, we need humane lawmakers like Senator Santorum."

HSLF noted that Santorum has provided leadership year after year in seeking higher levels of funding for enforcement of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act and the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

"Santorum's actions, and those of his colleagues to support his efforts, have boosted funding for enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act by 81 percent (a cumulative increase of \$32 million) over the past six years, which has enabled the agency to hire dozens more inspectors to look out for the welfare of animals at research laboratories, puppy mills, zoos, and the like. These funding increases have also directed the USDA to spend \$14 million specifically to ensure better compliance with the humane slaughter law. Before then, there had never been funds specifically designated for this purpose, and the agency had not taken seriously its enforcement responsibilities under this law, which literally affects billions of animals. And Congress has targeted \$800,000 in each of the past few years for USDA to focus on animal fighting cases.

"We need laws to protect animals, but we also need those laws to be enforced," added Amundson. "Senator Santorum has worked in a bipartisan fashion to secure millions in funding so that animal welfare laws can be better enforced."

In addition, Santorum introduced legislation, the Pet Animal Welfare Statute (PAWS), S. 1139,

to crack down on abusive "puppy mills" that, according to HSLF, "treat dogs like they are production machines." He has also supported a raft of other animal protection measures, including efforts to ban horse slaughter for human consumption.

In the 2006 HSLF scorecard on Senate "animal rights" issues, Santorum was one of 12 who scored with the organization on key votes 80 percent of the time. That same year, 22 others, mostly Democrats, scored 100 percent. Then Sen. Barack Obama only scored 60 percent.

## Sportsmen speak up

Earlier this month, staff leaders of the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance (USSA) asked Santorum about his work on dog breeding laws in conjunction with HSUS. He said his efforts were focused on trying to find an approach that was "reasonable."

"I do believe in people's ability to raise their own animals, but I also believe when animals go into the home as most of these animals do, you have to have consumer protection standards so you're not having defective animals and animals that have temper problems and other types of problems coming into people's homes. How many folks do you know that their dog is like their child? You just can't introduce an animal into the home without having some sort of standards that are set in place."

USSA also asked: "Are you aware of the issues between the Humane Society of the United States and the Sportsmen's Community?"

"Sure. I am very aware of it. I understand there are issues between them (HSUS) and production agriculture which is even worse than it is with the Humane Society and the sportsmen. I think you'll find I am very reasonable guy. I do believe we should be good stewards. We have dominion over animals. We have dominion over the earth and we have to be responsible for the treatment of them. I know most sportsmen are, but unfortunately there are some breeders who aren't. As a result this is the same thing as everything else when you have people that do not live up to those conditions. Everyone else has to deal with regulations as a result of that. You can't just turn a blind eye to it. You can't just say well it's too bad there are some bad people out there but too bad. I just don't think that's what laws are for. People keep a minimum standard for the care of and treatment of animals."

Santorum's comments have raised a lot of concerns, not only among conservatives opposed to "big government" and more regulations, but in Missouri's agricultural community.

"I can say with a great deal of confidence that Santorum's relationship with HSUS is a deal killer for much of the agriculture community. As far as I can tell he'd be comfortable with requiring regulations on agriculture – and large dog breeders are a part of this market – that would make it much less efficient to raise livestock," explained Missouri Farm Bureau President Blake Hurst in a recent opinion piece written by Frank Miniter. His piece, "Is Rick Santorum a Closet Animal Rights Activist?" appeared in Forbes online.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/frankminiter/2012/03/13/is-rick-santorum-a-closet-animal-rights-activist/>

Over the last three years, Missouri Farm Bureau banded with dog breeders and others to battle against an HSUS petition on puppy mills in the state, fearing, in part, that new restrictions on farm animal care could come next.

After Santorum finished his speech in Osage Beach, I asked him how farmers and ranchers should view his past relationship with HSUS. But it wasn't exactly the clarification that some are looking for.

"When I worked on an issue on the federal level, I worked with all of the breeders and with all of the livestock folks...that's what you do when you are a legislator, you work with both sides. When you look at the bill, (the Pet Animal Welfare Statute) it's nothing like what they tried to do here in Missouri." Δ

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