



Humane World Action Fund™

Formerly called
Humane Society Legislative Fund

2026 local and municipal candidate questionnaire

Candidate Name: Yousef Rabhi

Candidate Address: 1255 Kensington Dr, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Office Sought: Mayor

Locality: City of Ann Arbor

Staff Contact Name: Joshua Kaufman

Phone: (734) 560-6321

Email: cm@voteyousef.com

Website: voteyousef.com

Animals play an important role in the lives of many Americans. Countless citizens look to their local government to protect animals from cruel treatment and exploitation. Humane-minded individuals care deeply about the positions their elected officials take on animal protection issues.

For information on the range and details of our issue areas, please visit the websites of Humane World Action Fund (humaneaction.org) or Humane World for Animals (humaneworld.org).

Background information

What actions have you taken affecting the welfare of animals in the past? Please include actions taken at the local, state, or federal levels.

While in the Michigan legislature, I prioritized animal welfare legislation. I sponsored HB 6030 in 2018, a bill requiring veterinarians to provide a detailed information sheet on the onychectomy procedure (cat declawing that involves amputation of the claw, bone, tendons, and ligaments to the first knuckle of each toe) before it is performed. The required information would heavily discourage the procedure. This bill was part of a broader six-bill animal protection package that covered appointing pro-bono lawyers to advocate for animals in cruelty cases, banning the devocalization of dogs, banning private ownership of non-human primates, and allowing municipalities to regulate the keeping of pigeons. I also sponsored HB 6459 of 2022, a bill to ban cat declawing entirely in Michigan, an effort supported by the Michigan Humane Society.

What actions have you taken affecting the habitats of animals in the past? Please include actions taken at the local, state, or federal levels. Examples may include efforts to address the impacts of natural disasters such as wildfires and hurricanes on ecosystems.

Prior to serving as a state legislator, my entire professional career was rooted in ecosystem management and restoration. I worked at the City of Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation Program and University of Michigan Botanical Gardens and Arboretum protecting habitat for endangered species like the Massasagua Rattlesnake and more common animals like snapping turtles, deer and other creatures.

In the legislature, I introduced and sponsored environmental legislation to protect animal habitats, like the polluter pay legislation that proposed holding corporations accountable for contamination that harms wildlife and ecosystems. I introduced a resolution to shut down Line 5, the aging pipeline that poses catastrophic risk to Great Lakes wildlife.

As a former legislator and a current county commissioner, I support the continuation of the Greenbelt millage beyond 2033, which preserves critical wildlife habitats by protecting open land. I spearheaded the Washtenaw County resolution to oppose AI data centers that consume enormous amounts of water and energy that only degrade local ecosystems.

I'm also a member of the Huron River Watershed Council and the Coalition for Action on Remediation of Dioxane, both of which focus on preventing environmental damage to protect humans and wildlife. I'm a member of the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission and voted to protect hundreds of acres of high quality natural ecosystems and animal habitats.

As Mayor, preserving more habitat from destruction will be a top priority. This is in stark contrast to my opponent who has overseen habitat destruction on development projects like 2857 Packard St where acres of wildlife habitat were clearcut in 2026.

Are there any animal welfare programs or issues of importance to you that you would take the initiative on after you are elected? Examples might include municipal animal welfare standards; cracking down on large-scale commercial breeding facilities known as puppy mills; or local tethering and weather-related laws where pets are concerned.

I plan to take my legislative history on animal welfare and passion for protecting wildlife with me to the Mayor's Office! My main focus in regard to animal welfare is habitat preservation; I want to make sure Ann Arbor is a safe place to live for all residents, human and animal. I plan to pass a stronger tree ordinance to protect Ann Arbor's urban canopy, which provides critical habitats for birds and other urban wildlife. As Mayor, I will ensure that the city passes a stronger tree ordinance to enforce a high-cost barrier for private landowners that want to take healthy landmark trees and destroy healthy ecosystems. I will work expeditiously to replace underutilized public lawns with wet meadows, prairies, and Michigan native trees, creating urban wildlife corridors and increasing pollinator habitats. I will support the Gelman Superfund designation and apply Polluter Pay principles through EPA involvement to ensure full remediation of dioxane contamination threatening wildlife and water quality. I also plan to push for a local animal welfare ordinance which will include cracking down on puppy mills.

Additionally, I am very concerned about the impact that power outages have on pets especially in the winter. In 2023, a winter power outage forced my family to relocate to Lansing in dangerous conditions with our cat to keep warm while our power was out for several days. We were lucky to be able to do so, as friends and neighbors lost pets during that very outage. This is wholly unacceptable. As Mayor, I will lead the community to build a reliable and green grid by transitioning to municipal power.

Will you post information on your campaign website outlining your positions on animal protection issues?

Yes, I am committed to transparency, clear communication, and community-centered policies.

Do you have, or have you had in the past, any pets that have made an impact on you personally?

Yes, for the last eight years, I have been lucky to have my cat, Lalla Aicha, as part of our family. She was named after a pirate-queen from the 16th century because she embodies qualities of both a queen and pirate in one! She is orange and fluffy and has little pirate boot legs.

She was rescued as a stray from behind a friend's house. She and her brother were kittens and living under an abandoned car. I took them in and immediately took them for veterinary care at the Humane Society of Huron Valley. I specifically brought them to HSHV rather than a private veterinarian to support their work and contribute financially to their operation.

It was soon discovered that her brother, Ozorkan, had an untreatable illness and I ultimately lost him despite trying everything to nurse him back to health. I was completely devastated. His sister, Lalla, thankfully survived and we became pals.

I love her with all my heart. She has been with me through good times and bad. She greets me at the door every day after I return home. Any time I lay down on the couch, she comes and lays on top of me. If I'm on a Zoom call, she comes to walk over my keyboard, tail pointed straight up. And every time I turn on the shower she bolts over to see the water.

She is curious, sweet, sassy, and smart. Lalla is an essential part of our family, and I can't imagine my life without her. **Puppy mills:** *Internet sales, flea markets, face-to-face sales and the majority of pet stores that sell puppies are getting those dogs from puppy mills. A puppy mill is an inhumane high-volume dog breeding facility that churns out puppies for profit, ignoring the needs of the pups and their mothers. Dogs from puppy mills are often sick and unsocialized. Pet retailers often falsely assure consumers that the puppies they offer for sale are raised in reputable or humane breeding facilities, even when they come from inhumane facilities like mass production puppy mills. Our family of organizations hears from thousands of devastated consumers every year who bring home a dog only to have the animal fall sick and, in some cases, even die.*

Will you support efforts to end the sale of puppies sourced from puppy mills in pet stores?

Yes No Not Sure

Puppy mills reflect the same logic I oppose across many issues: treating living beings as units of production for corporate profit. Just as human beings are taken advantage of by big corporations, so are dogs by unethical breeders. These dogs are treated unethically in the name of profit, and I will support efforts to end the sale of puppies from puppy mills in pet stores.

Fashion: *Animals need their fur coats more than we do. But on fur factory farms around the world, millions of rabbits, foxes, mink and other wild animals spend their entire lives in cramped cages, deprived of the ability to engage in natural behaviors—only to be crudely gassed or electrocuted at the end. In the wild, animals are caught in crippling leghold traps for days without food or water. These archaic traps are*

indiscriminate, often maiming and killing non-target animals, like threatened species and even pets—all this in the name of fashion.

Will you support efforts to prohibit the sale of new products containing fur from animals?

Yes No Not Sure

Similarly to puppy mills, fur in the name of fashion exploits animals in the name of profit. My environmental justice framework opposes industries like this, the ones that cause unnecessary suffering to living beings, that violently take away from animals and natural resources. I will support efforts to prohibit the sale of new products containing animal fur.

Breed-specific legislation: *Throughout the United States, entire communities ban or restrict dogs because of their breed, or, more commonly, what is perceived to be their breed. Breed-based policies aren't founded on science or credible data, but on myths and misinformation surrounding different breeds and their natures. The impact of these policies on dogs, families, and animal shelters, though, is heartbreakingly real. Breed bans and restrictions force dogs out of homes and into shelters, taking up kennel space and resources that could be used for animals in need.*

Will you support efforts to prohibit discriminatory breed-based policies?

Yes No Not Sure

I believe in evidence-based policymaking. Breed-specific legislation is not based in fact or credible data. Breed bans also disproportionately impact lower-income pet owners who can not easily relocate, making this a housing issue and an equity issue. Policies should be grounded in evidence, not fear, and with consideration to real world effects. I will support efforts to prohibit breed-based policies.

Public contact: *While exciting to see up close, wild animals are altogether unfit for public contact. Substandard wildlife attractions like roadside zoos and cub petting operations exploit these animals to turn a quick profit, often with such neglect that horror stories have been recorded through undercover investigations. Not only do wild animals suffer cruelly when captured, transported, and placed in close proximity to humans—the risks they then pose to human health and safety are enormous. Cases of aggression may prove life-threatening, as may a host of zoonotic diseases. In recognition of these dangers, the federal government now prohibits the private ownership, breeding, import, or export of big*

cats acquired, or maintained and unregistered with the USDA, after June 18th, 2023. All big cats, even those owned and registered prior to the law's enactment, are now banned from use in public contact.

Will you support efforts to prohibit direct public contact with wild animal species?

Yes No Not Sure

Roadside zoos and petting operations are exploitative commercial enterprises that prioritize profit over welfare. Our economic system treats the environment and the animals in it as tools to be traded, bought, and sold, with no regard for their safety and wellbeing. Further, the risk of zoonotic diseases puts animal lives at risk. I will support efforts to prohibit direct public contact with wild animal species.

Factory farming: *On factory farms, egg-laying hens are packed into battery cages where they can't even spread their wings. Baby calves are taken from their mothers and confined in pens so small they can barely move, and pigs are locked in gestation crates the width and length of their bodies, unable to even turn around.*

Will you support efforts to prohibit the extreme confinement of breeding pigs, egg-laying hens, and calves raised for veal in restrictive, inadequate, and painful conditions?

Yes No Not Sure

This issue again treats living beings as units of production for corporate profit. Further, factory farming is a significant source of water and air pollution, which harms surrounding communities and ecosystems. We should instead focus on more humane, sustainable local food production as an alternative. I will support the efforts to prohibit extreme confinement of and harmful conditions for pigs, hens, and calves. CAFO's should be banned. I will also support local free range and organic food production and purchasing through expansion of the Ann Arbor Farmers Market and updated procurement guidelines at the city.

Local control: *Across the country, bills are often filed aiming to overturn hundreds of local ordinances related to animals. These overly broad bills seek to eliminate commonsense restrictions on matters of animal protection and public safety, alike, by undoing local ordinances prohibiting the sale of dogs from puppy mills; outlawing roadside zoos and similar cruel, unsafe operations; regulating livestock management; or even requiring safety standards for ingredients in our food or health products.*

Will you oppose any efforts to prohibit municipal or county ordinances related to animals?

Yes No Not Sure

Local communities should have the power to set stronger standards than state minimums – not to get rid of them entirely. This is relevant for labor, the environment, and animals; we should protect the vulnerable that surround us. I will stand against these overly broad bills in order to protect animals, just as I would stand against any broad bill that chips away at our rights and protections.

Thank you for your time! Please return the completed questionnaire to:

Humane World Action Fund

1255 23rd St NW, Suite 455

Washington, D.C. 20037

Phone: (202) 676-2314

Email: info@humaneaction.org

Rev. 1/25/2026

About us

We fight for political and policy change to tackle the root causes of animal cruelty and suffering.

We work to advance our mission by passing animal protection laws at the state and federal levels, educating the public about animal protection issues and supporting humane candidates for office. Together, we act to end animal cruelty.



**Humane World
Action Fund™**

humaneaction.org