

**A Survey Of Public Attitudes Toward Establishing A  
Low Cost Spay-Neuter Program For Low Income  
Pet Owners In Maryland**

**Summary Analysis Prepared For  
The Maryland Spay/Neuter Task Force Commission  
November, 2012**

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**With data collected for the Commission by  
The Center For The Study Of Local Issues  
Anne Arundel Community College  
Fall, 2012**

**Purpose:**

This study seeks answers to two fundamental questions regarding the current issue of how to more effectively deal with the homeless pet problem in Maryland by developing economically affordable means for low income pet owners to have their pets spay/neutered.

The questions are as follows: 1) To what extent is there public support for creating a low-cost spaying and neutering program for low income pet owners? 2) To what extent does the public support or oppose some of the most widely discussed and/or used methods for financing such a program?

**Research Methodology and Sampling:**

In an attempt to support the information gathering needs of the Maryland Spay-Neuter Task Force Commission, and with the sanction of the Department of Legislative Services of the Maryland General Assembly, Dr. E. Joseph Lamp wrote a series of survey questions designed to gauge public attitudes to the questions outlined above.

Question content came directly from suggestions provided by commission members and from ideas used by other states when instituting similar low cost spay/neuter programs.

Realizing there was no funding allocated to the commission for conducting such research, and time was of the essence, Dr. Lamp reviewed options for alternative pro-bono possibilities, and Anne Arundel Community College offered assistance.

He contacted Dr. Dan Nataf, Director of Anne Arundel Community College's Center For The Study Of Local Issues (CSLI) for assistance.<sup>1</sup> After careful scrutiny by Dr. Nataf and the CSLI board of directors, a final version of the questions was edited and included in the most current CSLI Bi-Annual telephone survey of Anne Arundel County residents. The survey was comprised of a series of 25 questions relating to political, social, and economic issues.

CSLI's work is highly respected by both government and private organizations. See footnote one. The questions appearing on the October, 2012 CSLI survey pertaining to

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<sup>1</sup> The Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) Center For The Study Of Local Issues (CSLI) was co-founded back in the mid-1970s by two AACC professors, Dr. Stephen F. Steele and Dr. E. Joseph Lamp as a student training facility in applied research skills and a research arm for the local community. AACC-CSLI was an innovator in this work, later used as model for such training and data gathering by key sociological organizations, with CSLI-type programs then developed at colleges across the United States and Hawaii. CSLI students are trained to conduct applied research under the tutelage of seasoned professionals, conducting telephone surveys, reviewing protocols used, and reviewing after-action reports. All statistical analysis and sampling protocols are done by professionals and professional oversight of students is done every step of the way. The Bi-annual survey is a mainstay CSLI research activity. It has been on-going and virtually uninterrupted since its inception in the mid-70s. In addition, CSLI has conducted research for many government and private organizations, and its work is highly respected.

spay/neuter are provided in Table 1. In addition respondents were asked if they owned dogs and cats in a question located near the end of the survey. That question is listed in Table 2.

**Table 1**

Questions As Asked On CSLI-Biannual Survey – Fall, 2012

**7.0 Maryland is considering a program to subsidize low-cost spaying and neutering for low income pet owners to lessen the problem of stray dogs and cats.**

**Do you support or oppose the creation of such a program?**

(1) Support If SUPPORT go to question 7.1 below

(2) Oppose

(3) Unsure (0) No answer

If Oppose, Unsure or No answer go to question 8 next page

If "SUPPORT" for question 7, ask: **Do you support or oppose the following ideas for financing this program...**

Paying an extra...	Support	Maybe	Oppose	N.A.
7.1. Dollar or two when getting pet rabies shots?	1	2	3	0
7.2. Penny or two when buying pet food?	1	2	3	0
7.3. Dollar or two added to your annual state income tax?	1	2	3	0
7.4. Dollar or two when renewing pet licenses?	1	2	3	0

**Table 2**

**22.1. Do you currently own a dog or a cat? Yes (2) No (0) No answer**

Students were trained in proper telephone interviewing protocols, and the study was conducted between October 15<sup>th</sup> and October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, using AACC facilities. A total of 510 adult residents were interviewed with an overall confidence level of +/- 4.3%. Here are the results of that study.

**Results:**

1. Support for spay/neuter initiative and suggested alternatives for funding.

Results clearly indicate very strong public support for a subsidized low cost spay/neuter program for low income pet owners in Maryland. Of the 498 persons responding, 71% (352) supported the creation of such a program. See Table 3.

<b>Table 3</b>			
Do you support or oppose the creation of a program to subsidize low-cost spaying and neutering for low income pet owners to lessen the problem of stray dogs and cats.			
Support	Oppose	Unsure	No answer
70.7% (352)	25% (124)	3.3% (16)	1.1% (6)

The 71% of those supporting such a program were then asked 4 additional questions concerning their attitudes towards how such a program might be financed. Once again, we find very strong support for three of the four alternatives: A total of 81% (296) supported paying an extra dollar or two when getting pet rabies shots, followed by 72% (262) supporting paying an extra penny or two when buying pet food, and 72% (260) supported paying another dollar or two when renewing pet licenses. Trailing well behind was the option of adding a dollar or two to their annual state income tax, with only 46% (166) of the respondents in support of this alternative. See Table 4.

<b>Table 4<sup>2</sup></b>				
If you support the creation of such a program, do you support or oppose the following ideas for financing it.				
Paying an extra...	Support	Maybe	Oppose	N.A.
1. Dollar or two when getting pet rabies shots?	81.3% (296)	4.6% (17)	12.8% (46)	1.5% (5)
2. Penny or two when buying pet food?	72.1% (262)	5.9% (21)	20.4% (74)	1.6% (6)
3. Dollar or two added to annual your state income tax?	45.8% (166)	4.5% (16)	47.9% (174)	1.6% (6)
4. Dollar or two when renewing pet licenses?	71.9% (260)	5.0% (18)	20.5% (74)	2.7% (10)

2. Additional data analysis of demographic items.

Finally, a series of inference tests were conducted to determine if any statistically significant differences in attitudes towards the spay/neuter initiative existed within the demographic subgroups of this population.<sup>3</sup> Few existed as one might expect: Especially when the overwhelming majority – 7

<sup>2</sup> The total number of respondents for questions listed in Table 4 is slightly higher than should be anticipated due to a small number of interviewer errors, whereby they allowed respondents to answer these questions when they really should not have done so. That is, the respondent had answered the screener question (see Table 3) with an answer other than “supporting” the creation of the spay/neuter program, and yet the interviewer allowed them to go on and answer the questions listed in Table 4, anyhow.

<sup>3</sup> To insure the statistical integrity of these results when conducting inference tests, some categories within key questions had to be either subsumed into larger groups, or recoded as necessary. For example, CSLI collected age data as discreet ages (i.e. asked as: “What is your age?”). For the analysis needed here, those discreet ages were regrouped within 4 larger quartile groups based on the cumulative percentages of those responding. That is, 25% of the respondents reported ages of between 18-42, the next 25% of respondents reported ages between 43-52 years of age, etc. and were grouped accordingly. In addition, the very small numbers (N=16) who responded “unsure” as to whether they supported or opposed the spay/neuter initiative were not included in the analysis.

out of 10 respondents -- of the entire sample was supportive of the initiative, along with three out of the four ways suggested for funding it in Maryland.

Cross-tabulated analyses with chi square statistical testing, along with review of observed versus expected cell frequencies revealed the following: There were no significant differences based on age, education, income, race, marital status, or religion.

Differences did occur regarding gender, whether or not one currently owned a dog or cat, and political affiliation. More specifically, women tended to be more supportive of the program initiative, as did “Democrats and Independents,” and those who indicated that they currently owned a dog or cat. However, in every category, while “statistically” significant differences existed, even those less supportive (i.e. “men,” “Republicans,” “those who did not own pets,”) still gave a majority vote for of support for the program but not to the same degree as did their counterparts. See Table 5.

By key demographics of:	Chi-Square	p-value	Significant Differences
1. Age	3.909	.271	No
2. Education	1.382	.847	No
3. Income	3.01	.807	No
4. Race	2.506	.286	No
5. Marital status	.335	.953	No
6. Religion	4.557	.871	No
7. Gender	13.888	.000	Yes
8. Pet ownership	10.237	.001	Yes
9. Political party	34.667	.000	Yes

**Conclusions:**

What conclusions can be drawn from this research that may help the decision-making of the spay/neuter task force?

First and foremost, in a scientifically developed research study of over 500 residents, conducted by the Anne Arundel Community College Center For the Study of Local Issues, 7 out of 10 gave the Maryland Spay/Neuter Task Force Commission the “go ahead” by supporting the idea of creating a low cost spay/neuter program for low income pet owners in Maryland.

Second, the responses clearly provide a suggested road map for both the public and private sectors to partner with suggestions as to how to pay for it: And doing so with strongly supported options that ONLY impact those individuals either with pets, or supporting pets in some way. Why? Because over 7 out of 10 respondents supported all three methods for paying for such a program: an

extra buck or two on rabies shots or pet licenses and an extra penny or two at the pet food store. And all the funding would ONLY be coming out of the pockets of those with an affinity for animals, paying just a bit more themselves, to help those less fortunate. Those Marylanders not interested in animal welfare issues would not be impacted in any financial manner whatsoever.

In closing, I would like to thank Anne Arundel Community College's Center For the Study of Local Issues, especially Dr. Dan Nataf, its director, the CSLI Board of Directors, and AACC Vice President Trish Casey-Whiteman for their outstanding support of the Maryland General Assembly and the commission in this effort. And I thank all of the AACC-CSLI students who volunteered their time to help with this project. This type of work is an oftentimes overlooked but vital contribution of our colleges, using their applied research capabilities to give back to our community and making it a better place for all. Without their help, this effort could not have been achieved.