

## **PIJAC Welcomes New Chair, Laura J. “Peach” Reid**

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), on the heels of electing a new president, Mike Bober, has now elected its first female Chair in 40 years, Laura J. “Peach” Reid. Reid is president and CEO of Fish Mart, Inc., the Northeast’s largest wholesale distributor of aquatics and pets. Prior to being elected as Chair, Reid held the office of Secretary-Treasurer for the Council, and she has served on the PIJAC Board of Directors for the past four years. But her involvement didn’t start there. In fact, she’s been a member of PIJAC since the early 90s and has been actively involved in various committees within the organization, including their Legislative Committee, Executive Committee, Aquatic Subcommittee and the Zoonosis Subcommittee, which has PIJAC leading the way on critical education and outreach relating to various diseases potentially passed from animal to human. Those who’ve worked with Reid either through any number of her publicly elected positions or through her efforts to advance the welfare of animals throughout the years can attest to her dedication to the roles she takes on.

“When Peach decides she’s going to do something, you better believe she’s diving in head first and giving it her all,” said Bober. “She led our efforts to prevent a pet sale ban in Connecticut despite the fact that it didn’t affect her business directly, and she kept some very strong personalities working together throughout the process. I can’t wait to see what she brings to the role of Chair.”

Reid’s involvement with PIJAC for the past 30 years has allowed her to be a part of where the organization has been and the challenges and triumphs that have led them to where they are today. She says in many ways, PIJAC is still fighting many of the same legislative and regulatory issues they were decades ago, but over the years things have gotten increasingly complex and there are more issues now than ever, which in turn means more work than ever before, for PIJAC.

“As we learn more in the scientific community about threats to the environment, threats to human health, and threats to the well-being of animals, we as an organization and a united industry are making more informed decisions and we are seeing more effective results,” said Reid.

With PIJAC representing the industry on legislative and regulatory issues at the international, federal, state and even local levels, there is much to do. And PIJAC, with an experienced Reid as Chair is in a good position to take on the necessary challenges at all levels. In fact, it was just two years ago that Connecticut was the first in the country to consider a statewide ban on the sale of all dogs and cats at pet stores. Reid recounts a scary time, where her and PIJAC’s involvement may have been more instrumental than ever. They were successful in defeating the ban, and while there are strict regulations on retailers and their sources for dogs and cats, Connecticut is now serving as a model for other cities and states considering the same. This was an early victory in the fight to protect pet choice from misguided ban legislation.

“PIJAC’s primary purpose is to protect and promote responsible pet ownership,” Reid adds. “While we used to focus heavily on the ‘promoting’ through retailer education and certification programs, it is the intent moving forward that the Pet Leadership Council (PLC) take on more of an educational role so PIJAC can really tackle the legislative and regulatory issues facing the industry, head on.”

A more united pet industry is working for everyone’s best interest. There are major industry initiatives, that PIJAC supports and are involved in, that each focus on specific issues and segments within the

industry. These initiatives not only support PIJAC's efforts, but also more importantly, allow PIJAC to focus on government affairs. For example, the Human Animal Bond Research Initiative (HABRI) is funding scientific research involving human health and companion animals and Pets in the Classroom is going in at ground level teaching our youth the benefits of companion animal ownership and proper animal care early on, The American Pet Products Association, the Pet Industry Distributors Association, the World Pet Association and the Pet Care Trust are also major industry organizations, each working diligently on specific segments, while at the same time all working toward the success of the industry.

"We are proud of the organization PIJAC has become and the organizations we've worked with along the way," said Bober. "Having Peach assume the Chair at this unique time in PIJAC's history just makes sense, as it demonstrates both a continuity with our history and a focus on our future."

"As Chairman, one goal is to get more people in the pet business actively engaged in protecting and promoting our responsible pet industry," said Reid. "Only with all of us working together, collaboratively, will we be able to more effectively deal with the ever-growing number of challenges facing us - both in the legislative and regulatory arenas, and also with the availability of quality pets for families everywhere."

Given Reid's long list of accolades and history of high engagement, she is honored by her new role as Chair, and is ready to take on this both historically new and reassuringly familiar position.