



AKC Government Relations 2021 Successes

June 2021

AKC GR is pleased to be able to report many successes so far this year. The following list highlights some of the AKC Government Relations' (AKC GR) legislative successes through June 4, 2021. These and other victories have been won in cooperation with AKC federations, clubs, and responsible dog owners and breeders around the country who continue to work tirelessly to promote positive canine legislation in their state and community.

To view all Legislative Alerts posted for your state in 2021, as well as the latest information on all bills being tracked by the AKC Government Relations Department, visit the AKC Legislative Action Center at www.akcgr.org.

Arkansas – HB 1883, which was supported by AKC GR, guarantees the right to utilize a working animal. It also provides that an ordinance or resolution shall not be enacted by a municipality that terminates, bans, or creates an undue hardship relating to the job or use of a working animal or animal enterprise in commerce, service, legal hunting, agriculture, husbandry, transportation, ranching, entertainment, education, or exhibition. HB 1883 was enacted at Act 1091.

California – Assembly Bill 702 would have regulated every breeder in the state. AKC met extensively with the author and key committee members and staff, activated local clubs and hobbyists, coordinated meetings for clubs with their Assembly members, submitted alternative language, and partnered with key stakeholders in opposition, including California animal shelters. The bill was held in committee, with reports stating that no member was going to vote for it. It has been tabled until 2022 and the author and committee have committed to work with AKC on alternative solutions in the interim. AKC GR has issued a follow up alert to clubs with actions they can take to thank the committee and help AKC lay groundwork for 2022 advocacy and education.

Colorado – HB 21-1102 as introduced sought to regulate pet stores in the state and not allow any new pet stores to open. As introduced, the bill contained legislative findings claiming that rescues were a better answer for public safety, as pet stores import dogs from out of state. AKC and its state federation succeeded in educating House members about the many inaccuracies with this statement and the problems that have surfaced regarding importation by rescues. As amended, the bill has addressed concerns and removed these legislative findings. The bill would also allow pet stores to continue to exist, so long as certain information is disclosed online and on all cages in the store. The bill as amended was signed by the governor.

Connecticut – In February, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture adopted new regulations implementing changes in law made back in 2011 and 2017 requiring oversight of the state's animal shelters and animal importers. These new rules provide standards for buildings and premises; ventilation and temperature; and animal care requirements, including staffing requirements, enclosure size and design standards, rules for feeding and access to clean water, cleaning requirements, and access standards. The rules also provide updates for commercial kennels (limited to boarding kennels, grooming facilities, and veterinary kennels that provide boarding and grooming for nonmedical purposes), pet shops, and training facilities.

Florida – SB 72, which provides certain protections to business entities from civil liability claims related to COVID-19, was enacted as Chapter 2021-1.

Florida – AKC GR requested amendments to SB 96, a child welfare bill that, among other provisions, requires certain cross-reporting of suspected child abuse, abandonment or neglect, and animal cruelty. The bill contained a problematic provision that would have changed the definition of "animal husbandry" to exclude care of non-livestock animals. SB 96 was substantially amended and has passed in both chambers without the problematic definition.

Georgia – HB 112 seeks to extend the applicability for one year of a 2020 Act, supported by AKC GR, that provides certain immunities from liability claims regarding COVID-19. HB 112 is now Act 175.

For more information and the latest developments, visit www.akcgr.org or contact the appropriate GR staff member.



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Illinois – In May 2020, a proposal was introduced by the Chicago City Council that supposedly sought to close a loophole in their pet store ban to stop irresponsible sellers from misrepresenting themselves as rescues to avoid regulation while accessing new markets. The fact that irresponsible breeders are misrepresenting themselves as rescues is a testament to the problems with bans on the sale of purpose-bred pets by regulated breeders at pet stores.

As introduced, this ordinance would have required hobby breeder to obtain a pet facility license (requiring on site staff and locations only in non-residential areas). For the past year, AKC and our state federation met with key council members, submitted written testimony, activated local breeders, submitted an op-ed to local media, and testified in council hearings. As a result, all language regulating hobby breeders was removed from the final proposal passed by the council in May 2021.

Indiana – Senate Bill 1, among other provisions, would protect any “person” (including but not limited to individuals, associations, etc.) from civil liability for damages or injury “resulting from exposure of an individual to coronavirus.” This includes premises owned or managed by a person, and activities managed, organized, or sponsored by a person. AKC actively supported this bill, which could provide protections for shows and events in the state. The bill was signed by the governor.

Maryland – HB 293 and SB 200 are reintroductions of legislation from last session. As introduced last session, they sought to prohibit a person from sponsoring, conducting, or participating in certain organized contests that have the objective of hunting or killing certain wildlife for prizes or monetary awards. As written, this could have negatively impacted field trials and other AKC sanctioned events. AKC GR and the Sportsmen Alliance worked to amend the bill to exclude lawful dog training or dog competition events. HB 293 and SB 200 were introduced this year with the amended language included. HB 293 was passed by both chambers with AKC’s amendment and became law on June 1.

Maryland – HB 1080 / SB 760 sought to authorize the filing of a petition against an owner or custodian for reasonable costs of caring for a seized animal, including the provision of food, water, shelter, and medical care. The bills limited costs to \$15 a day per animal plus reasonable costs for necessary veterinary care, but also provided for forfeiture of the animal for failure to make the required payment. AKC GR met with the sponsors to express concerns that the bills allow for the forfeiture of animals with no mechanism to have them returned to an individual who is found not guilty or has charges dropped. GR also provided written and oral testimony in opposition of the bills during public hearings. Neither bill received further consideration from their respective committees prior to the end of the session.

Maryland – SB 103 is a reintroduction of legislation from last session which originally sought to regulate the Internet sales of animals by pet stores. The original language concerned many who use Facebook or other social media “brag” pages to showcase their dogs and puppies for sale. AKC GR worked with the sponsor to amend the bill to protect hobbyists. It further clarified that a pet store does not include situations where animals are sold at establishments where they were bred, and the buyer and seller are both present during the sale or transfer. SB 103 was introduced this session with the same amended language. It was further amended to develop a task force including AKC representation to study the sourcing of pets used by pet stores and broker entities. The bill became law on June 1.

Maine – LD 1265 would remove the permission for hunting dogs to be at large; and prohibited coyote hunting with dogs. AKC GR issued an alert and testified before the Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in opposition together with sportsmen and women. The committee voted unanimously the bill ought not to pass.

Massachusetts – The Town of Marshfield scheduled several dog-related proposals for a vote at special town meeting in October 2020. They included encouraging adoption of a breeder and kennel license program. After AKC GR issued an alert and local advocates and breeders began to contact town officials, the breeder licensing proposal was removed from the agenda to allow work on it further before re-introducing it in spring 2021. At the town’s spring meeting, there was no breeder licensing proposal included on the warrant.

New Hampshire – On March 1, 2021, the House Municipal and County Government considered HB 467, which would amend the “Use Taxation” law so that “open space land” would not apply to “any farm land or forest land used to harbor non-native, non-domesticated animal species”. AKC GR and the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation testified that some facilities where dog owners train with non-native birds (i.e., pheasants) would be negatively impacted. The committee voted the bill inexpedient to legislate.

New Hampshire – Two bills regarding rabies vaccinations were considered by the House Environment and Agriculture Committee on February 17, 2021. AKC GR issued an alert that HB 322 would require a color photo of a dog, cat, or ferret to be attached to its rabies vaccination certificate and HB 367 would require rabies antibody tests after vaccination and allow rabies titers in lieu of rabies vaccination for dogs with a reaction to initial vaccination. After hearing concerns about cost and adequate protection, including testimony from AKC GR and NH DOGS, the committee voted unanimously to reject both bills.

New Hampshire – AKC GR worked closely with NH Beagle clubs to express concerns about HB 118, which would change the qualifications for commissioners appointed to the NH Fish and Game Commission. Instead of sporting clubs providing nominees for appointment, the bill would authorize “participating organizations,” defined as organizations with wildlife or conservation experience, to nominate individuals. The House Fish and Game Committee has retained it and no further action will take place this year.

New Hampshire – A 2019 law classified a person as a pet vendor if they transfer 25 dogs in a 12-month period. It required all license applicants to obtain municipal zoning authorization, including those who were not previously required to get such authorization. As a result of this legislative change, some breeders that were previously licensed were unable to obtain a new license, resulting in a violation of due process for those breeders.

AKC and the NH federation drafted HB 250 which addressed these issues by (1) raising the minimum transfer threshold to 35 dogs, and (2) “grandfathering” as licensees those breeders who were not previously required to petition local authorities for authorization. The bill is currently pending House concurrence on minor Senate amendments to the bill.

New Jersey – House Bill 1175 limits liability related to COVID-19. This bill, supported by AKC, was signed by the governor in April.

New Jersey – Assembly Bill 1365 would have prohibited the “harassing or taking” of wildlife at competitive events. This would have impacted all clubs offering AKC-sanctioned performance events in New Jersey, including those that offer sporting, hound, earthdog, and herding events. AKC voiced strong opposition to A.1365, and it was pulled from committee consideration.

Oklahoma – As introduced, House Bill 1580 contained tethering provisions that could have harmed responsible dog owners and outdoor dog events. This bill passed committee, but after discussions with AKC, the sponsor agreed to hold the bill and work with AKC, clubs, and sportsmen to develop a revised proposal that addresses cruelty concerns without harming responsible owners.

Rhode Island – AKC GR worked with the town council of Tiverton, RI in updating its dogs “at large” and nuisance ordinance. As a result, the town will provide a warning and AKC materials on how to stop barking dogs before issuing fines in violation of disturbing the peace. The council also adopted AKC’s suggestions regarding instances when a dog may properly be off an owner’s property and off leash and therefore not subject to penalties.

South Dakota - House Bill 1046, which limits liability for certain exposures to COVID-19 at events was signed into law in February.

Tennessee – Senate Bill 511 sought to create a new commercial breeder licensing program similar to a program that was allowed to sunset in 2014 due to its ineffectiveness. AKC GR provided direct advocacy with key Tennessee lawmakers, provided action alerts and testimony in opposition, and worked with Tennessee residents to express their opposition as constituents. The Senate Energy, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Committee considered the bill and did not advance it.

Texas – Senate Bill 323 would have expanded the state’s licensed breeders program to include many hobby breeders by reducing the thresholds for ownership and sales that currently exempt many hobby breeders. AKC presented strong, sustained opposition to SB 323, which resulted in the measure not being scheduled for committee consideration.

Texas – House Bill 1083 sought to provide for the quick termination of ownership rights in animals that are impounded by an animal shelter. AKC expressed strong, sustained opposition. HB 1083 did not advance.

Utah – As introduced, House Bill 420 would have banned the retail sale of pets at pet stores, unless they were sourced from a shelter or rescue. The definition of “pet store” was so broad it could also have encompassed home-based breeders and hobbyists. AKC GR expressed concerns with the bill, and issued an alert to Utah clubs. The bill was tabled for the year and did not move prior to adjournment.

Vermont – House Bill 421, supported by the AKC and the state federation, narrows the list of individuals authorized as “humane officers” who investigate cases of animal cruelty and mandates the completion of trainings approved by the Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board.

Virginia – HB 2109 originally sought to expand the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services by adding an at-large member who is expert in companion animal welfare who is employed by a releasing agency in Virginia. AKC GR, its state federation, and others expressed concerns and asked for an expansion to ensure all animal welfare experts were represented. A substitute bill offered removed the provision and instead required that at least one of the congressional district appointees be a veterinarian licensed and currently practicing in the Commonwealth. The bill ultimately failed in subcommittee.

West Virginia – HB 2095 sought to enhance West Virginia’s animal welfare laws and bring state law into alignment with reasonable, accepted animal husbandry and care laws and provide comprehensive laws regarding the care of animals by public shelters. The sponsor agreed to offer AKC’s amendments to extreme weather and consumer protection and extended an offer to work with AKC in the next session. The bill passed the House with amended language. While the bill did not make it to the Senate floor for a vote prior to the end of session on April 10, AKC GR will be working with the sponsor to have the bill reintroduced next session.

Wyoming - Senate File 24 sought to address the issue of caring for animals seized on suspicion of cruelty. AKC and local clubs expressed significant concerns with Senate Bill 24, which could have caused a defendant to permanently lose ownership of their animals if they were unable to pay for the costs of boarding the animals throughout the trial– even if they were found not guilty. The Senate Agriculture, State, Public Lands, & Water Committee tabled this bill.

Wyoming – Senate File 25, similar to Senate File 24, addresses the issue of the care for animals seized when the owner is suspected of cruelty. This bill had several positive aspects, but AKC asked for specific clarifications to ensure that an owner would not lose their animals if they are ultimately found not guilty. The Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee filed amendments to amend this language. She also added language stating that no animal may be forfeited without a hearing, regardless of whether a bond is posted, if “the animal is connected to the livelihood or ability to make a living of the owner.” Finally, she shortened the mandatory time frame in which a hearing must be conducted from 14 days to 7 days. The bill was signed by the governor with AKC’s requested amendment.