



AKC Government Relations Legislative Alert

June 2021

National Legislative Update

Twenty-three state legislatures and the District of Columbia are currently in session or special session. Twenty-seven states have adjourned. AKC Government Relations is currently tracking more than 2,100 local, state, and federal issues. The following are highlights of current legislation around the country:

Major Issues and Developments

US Congress – [HR 2840/S 1385](#) also referred to as the Puppy Protection Act is the re-introduction of a measure from last congress that would establish a number of new arbitrary, one-size-fits-all requirements for USDA-licensed dog breeders. [Generally, dog breeders who maintain more than 4 intact females (cats, dogs or other small pet mammals) and sell transfer one or more pets sight unseen are subject to USDA licensing.] New requirements would include but are not limited to: completely solid flooring; mandated primary enclosure height such that a dog can stand on its hind legs and not touch the enclosure roof; new space requirements; mandated feeding twice daily; unrestricted access from primary enclosure to outdoor exercise yards large enough to achieve full stride during daylight hours; specific mental stimulation and socialization; annual dental exams; and arbitrary prohibitions on a number of litters bred; arbitrary prohibitions on breeding age.

US Congress – Companion measures [HR 1448/S 613](#) direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on dog training therapy and to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary to provide service dogs to veterans with mental illnesses who do not have mobility impairments. AKC has recommended amendments to assure behavioral, health and training standards for the dogs. Both measures have been referred to their respective Veterans Affairs committees. HR 1448 was passed by the House in mid May.

US Congress – [HR 1016](#) would establish an Animal Cruelty Crimes Section within Department of Justice to enforce federal animal cruelty laws. This measure has been referred to the Judiciary committee.

US Congress – [HR 1022/S 951](#) establishes a Veterans Administration program to establish grants to provide service dogs to certain qualified disabled veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. Grants would be provided for dogs from not-for-profit service dog trainers who meet credentials published by the Association of Service Dog Providers for Military Veterans, including passage of multiple levels of AKC CGC tests. The program would also develop appropriate means to measure and report on psychosocial function, therapeutic compliance, and change in reliance on prescription narcotics and psychotropic medications of program participants.

Connecticut – In addition to other helpful provisions, [HB 6504](#) would require a veterinary examination of animals brought into the state by animal shelters. AKC GR issued an [alert](#) and testified in support of HB 6504. The House passed the bill on May 25, 2021. It awaits a vote in the Senate.

Connecticut – [SB 123](#) would increase the penalties for injuring or killing a police K-9 or volunteer search and rescue K-9. AKC supports the bill, which was voted favorably by the Joint Public Safety Committee. The Senate unanimously voted in support of the bill on May 26, 2021 and sent it to the House for consideration.

Information current as of June 4, 2021
For more information and the latest developments, contact
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Connecticut – [SB 923](#) would require the Connecticut Sentencing Commission to review the state’s animal cruelty laws and make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly. AKC GR and the Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs and Responsible Dog Owners (CFDRDO) are concerned that members of the commission do not have relevant animal welfare experience. Consistent with the position of the Department of Agriculture, AKC GR submitted testimony requesting that the commission collaborate with the department and subject matter experts. The Executive Director of the commission committed to obtaining input from animal welfare experts like AKC and CFDRDO. SB 923 unanimously passed the Senate and is now on the House calendar for consideration. AKC GR continues to work with members of the House to address concerns.

CT, Stamford – In January, the Stamford Board of Representatives expressed interest in adopting a tethering ordinance similar to the 2020 law enacted in Virginia. The resulting proposal would have defined “adequate shelter” and “adequate space,” and prohibited tethering in weather below 32 degrees or above 85 degrees. In May, after months of discussion with interest groups, the sponsor announced that all text referring to “adequate space and shelter” would be stricken, and replaced by requiring anyone who tethers a dog outside to within sight of the dog at all times. Despite some controversy regarding the reasonableness of this criteria, the committee voted to send the [amended proposal](#) to the Board for a decision on whether to schedule a public hearing on its merits. The Board next meets on June 7, 2021.

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. As introduced, the bill problematically included a provision that would have changed the definition of “animal husbandry” to exclude care of non-livestock animals. SB 96 was substantially amended, passed in both chambers, and is pending transmittal to the Governor without the problematic animal husbandry definition.

Florida – [SB 388](#) authorizes emergency transport of and allows a paramedic or EMT to provide emergency medical care to a police canine injured in the line of duty under certain circumstances and when no person requires transport or care at that time. AKC supported the measure, which passed in both chambers and is pending transmittal to the Governor.

FL, Orange County – The Orange County Board of Commissioners held a work session to discuss an ordinance that seeks to ban the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in pet stores unless they are sourced from animal shelter or rescue organizations. AKC GR submitted a letter of opposition to measures that limit pet stores to sourcing pets from organizations that are not required to comply with the same animal health, inoculations, and transport requirements or to provide consumer protection provisions as are required for other pet sellers in the state. Commissioners voted unanimously in favor of the ban and directed staff to redraft the ordinance. The revised ordinance will be available on 6/17/22 and a public hearing is scheduled for 6/22/21.

Illinois – HB 1711 bans the retail sale of pets in pet stores and prohibits any rescue affiliated with a breeder to source to a pet store. AKC GR and its state federation joined a broad coalition in [opposing this bill](#), which limits pet choice and implies that a rescue is the best place to get a dog. HB 1711 has passed both the House and Senate and will be sent to the governor.

Illinois – [SB 153](#) would have provided a court-appointed advocate to represent the interests of animals in a case involving the injury, health, or safety of a dog or cat. AKC and its state federation [opposed this bill](#), as there is the potential for legal confusion about who will be responsible for making decisions impacting animals if an advocate participates in a case. The bill passed the House, but was ultimately held by the sponsor on the Senate floor and is not scheduled for a vote before the end of session.

Illinois – [SB 1672](#) originally sought to prohibit insurance companies from discriminating against policyholders based on the breed of dog they own. As passed by the General Assembly, it was amended to instead require companies offering

liability insurance for renter's or homeowner's insurance to report dog-related claims to the state for the next two years. Numerous items must be reported, including the breed of the dog, the circumstances surrounding the incident, the original sourcing of the dog, and other information.

KY, Louisville/Jefferson County – The Louisville Metro Public Health Committee is considering changes to the city/county animal control ordinance. While the proposed ordinance features some reasonable provisions, it also includes certain vague and problematic dog care requirements. AKC GR issued [an alert](#) and submitted a letter of concern and recommended amendments. The ordinance could be considered at the June 16 meeting.

Massachusetts – [HB 2547](#) would authorize the emergency transport and treatment of police K-9s injured in the line of duty. AKC GR urged Massachusetts residents to contact their lawmakers and request that they co-sponsor the bill; and as a result, a significant number of new legislators signed on as co-sponsors. A [companion bill, SB 1606](#), was refiled in the Senate. Supporters requested that the Joint Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee grant an early public hearing on the bill.

Massachusetts – [SB 230](#) and [HB 384](#) are refiled bills banning the retail sale of cats and dogs at pet shops unless they are sourced from animal shelter or rescue organizations. Similar to past versions, the proposed animal shelter and rescue definitions are problematic because they exclude rescue activities by breeders. The bills initially were assigned to the Joint Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee for review, which last session redrafted them to create consumer protections irrespective of the source of the pet. The bills have been reassigned to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. AKC GR continues to work with concerned breeders, dog owners, and allied groups in opposition to these bills as currently written.

New Hampshire – AKC GR and NH DOGS testified in support of [HB 249](#), which seeks to authorize animal shelters to own or lease a facility rather than be required to own it. The bill also clarifies which exemptions to health certificate requirements apply to animal shelters, and requires that shelters contact the microchip owner of record before any transfer of the animal. HB 249 passed the House. AKC GR also testified in support of HB 249 before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which voted favorably on the bill. [Read more.](#)

New Hampshire – Two bills containing amended language regarding the creation of a statewide animal records database continue to advance. After AKC GR and NH DOGS expressed concerns about [HB 532](#), a positively amended version of the bill was incorporated into House Budget Bill HB 2. The Senate Finance Committee has adopted the amended language in [SB 127](#), an appropriations bill, and voted in favor of HB 2.

New Hampshire – [SB 122](#) would, among other provisions, increase the penalty from a misdemeanor to a felony for a person who injures or kills, or who allows their animal to injure or kill, a working service dog. AKC GR submitted testimony in support of this provision. The Senate Committee on the Judiciary voted favorably to release an amended bill that preserves the language supported by AKC. The bill passed in the Senate and was favorably released by the House Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

New Jersey – [SB 2868](#) seeks to establish a courtroom advocates (“lawyers for dogs”) program in the state. The bill features broad language that will likely impact the legal classification of animals in the state. The bill passed the Senate and has been referred to the Assembly Judiciary Committee. AKC GR is working with a coalition of interest groups in opposition to SB 2868 as currently written. [Read more.](#)

New York – Senate Bill 1130 and Assembly Bill 4283 would ban the retail sale of pets in pet stores in the state. AKC GR and its state federation are opposing these bills and have issued alerts, communications to both the Assembly and

Senate, submitted an op-ed, and provided talking points for lawmakers supporting AKC's position. Senate Bill 1130 is pending in the Assembly Codes Committee. Assembly Bill 4283 is pending in the Rules Committee. [Read more.](#)

Pennsylvania – AKC GR is working with the sponsor of [SB 1267](#), which seeks to create a task force to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based plan for animal welfare laws through collaboration among veterinarians, doctors, state agencies, and concerned legislators. The bill will be reintroduced as a Domestic Animal Task Force, to include individuals representing various stakeholder organizations and representatives from the PA Department of Agriculture and the Attorney General's office. AKC GR is working to ensure that AKC, the Pennsylvania Federation of Dog Clubs, and a breeder based in Pennsylvania are included on the Task Force. Target date for introduction of the legislation is late June.

Rhode Island – [HB 5577](#) would authorize court-appointed legal advocates for animals. AKC GR issued an [alert](#) and testified in opposition to the bill before the House Judiciary Committee, which retained the bill to review it further. The Senate President introduced [SB 534](#) and the Senate Minority Leader introduced [SB 601](#), companion bills to HB 5577. AKC GR developed a fact sheet for constituents and contacted potentially impacted governmental stakeholders, including the Department of Environmental Management, Attorney General, and the Rhode Island Supreme Court. AKC GR, AKC clubs in the state, and the RI ACLU testified in opposition and met with lawmakers and staff. A commitment has been made by the Senate President to not move forward with the bills as introduced.

South Carolina – [H 4094](#) contains problematic findings and seeks to restrict ownership of and require registration of fertile pit bull dogs with a governmental animal control agency. These requirements would apply to "American pit bull terriers, American Staffordshire terriers, Staffordshire bull terriers," dogs displaying the physical traits of one or more of the listed breeds, or a dog exhibiting the distinguishing characteristics that conform to the standards established by the AKC for any of the breeds. AKC GR issued [an alert](#) and sent a letter of concern to subcommittee members. H 4094 has appeared on the agenda of the House Special Laws Subcommittee, but has not yet been considered.

Vermont – [HB 421](#), which was supported by both AKC and the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs, requires training and oversight for animal control officers, and appropriately narrows the definition of "humane societies" that may appoint animal control officers. The governor signed the amended bill on May 20, 2021. [Read more.](#)