

A BETTER LIFE FOR ANIMALS ACROSS AMERICA

2008 ANIMAL WELFARE LEGISLATION: A YEAR IN REVIEW

American Humane's Office of Public Policy in Washington, D.C., constantly advocates for stronger animal welfare laws to increase the protection and well-being of our nation's most vulnerable beings.

In 2008, we had much success in accomplishing this important work. Thanks to many new policies and laws implemented this year, the future looks brighter for thousands of animals across the country. These are just some of the many bills American Humane worked on for animals this year:

BETTER LAWS AGAINST ANIMAL CRUELTY

Before this year, Utah had one of the weakest animal cruelty laws in the nation. Because of this, the torturer of a little dog named Henry received only six months in jail. Little Henry was tortured so badly that he was blinded in one eye, chased with a leaf blower and thrown in an oven. But this brave animal became the "spokes-dog" for a landmark bill to make torture of dogs and cats a felony for the first time in Utah's history.

Henry and his caretaker lobbied the Utah legislature for months, as did Anne Davis, the leader of the Animal Advocacy Alliance of Utah. The widespread effort rallied citizens of Utah and throughout the nation to convince the Utah legislature to pass an animal cruelty felony law. American Humane's Office of Public Policy was honored to work with the Alliance and is proud that Utah, along with 44 other states, now has a felony-level animal cruelty law on the books.

The state of Alaska soon followed. Since 1959, Alaska — home of some of the most remarkable animals in the world — did not have a felony law for animal cruelty. Although Alaska's new bill is not nearly as strong as we would like, it is a good start.

In other states, more felony-level animal cruelty bills were introduced. These bills lay the groundwork for our work next year. Michigan filed a bill to allow courts to require convicted animal abusers to serve felony-level consecutive sentences for each animal they abuse. Massachusetts filed a bill to penalize for intentionally creating or marketing images of actual animal cruelty. New Jersey filed a bill to make it a felony to commit

animal cruelty in front of a child. And New York filed a felony cruelty law for aggravated cruelty against wildlife. These are just a few of the many strong bills introduced to strengthen animal cruelty laws.

We will support these states in their attempts to move felony-level provisions forward again in 2009. We will also push for felony-level animal cruelty laws in the remaining five states that do not have this legislation: Arkansas, Idaho, Mississippi, North Dakota and South Dakota. If you live in one of these states and would like to help, please contact us at publicpolicy@americanhumane.org.

PENALIZING DOGFIGHTING

At the federal level, we celebrated the passage of strong anti-dogfighting language that was included in the Federal Farm Bill and signed into law in May. This language makes it a federal offense, with up to five years' imprisonment, to sponsor or train dogs for fighting, to mail dogfighting materials and to otherwise promote dogfights.

Maryland passed a bill making attending a dogfight or cockfight a felony. Virginia passed a bill to add organized dogfighting as a qualifying offense under the Virginia Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act. Next year we'll continue our efforts on supporting legislation to strengthen animal fighting laws.

PROMOTING SPAY/NEUTER

American Humane advocated for and celebrated the passage of a Colorado bill that requires the state's animal shelters and rescue groups to spay or neuter cats and dogs before releasing them to adopters. This is a positive step toward supporting shelters and responding to the pet overpopulation crisis.

IMPROVING ANIMAL AND CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

To ensure more efficient reporting of animal and child abuse, a cross-reporting provision was included in the District of Columbia's Animal Protection Amendment Act of 2008.

Next year we will continue to support other states that file cross-reporting bills. With cross-reporting, animal welfare professionals report incidents of suspected child abuse, and child welfare professionals report incidents of suspected animal abuse. This sharing of resources allows these professionals to intervene at early stages of family violence.

STOPPING BREED SPECIFIC LEGISLATION (BSL)

American Humane was instrumental in educating government officials on why BSL does not work and proposing breed neutral alternatives. Through our efforts, we were able to stop BSL from being passed in several cities, including Paris, Tenn.; Rockwood, Tenn.; Ralston, Neb.; Sandy, Utah; Spencer, Iowa; and Livonia, Mich.. If your community is considering BSL, please contact American Humane's Public Policy Office at publicpolicy@americanhumane.org for the facts you need to propose effective alternatives.

CONTINUING CAMPAIGNS

Banning Pound Seizure. Michigan filed a bill to ban pound seizure (the obtaining of shelter pets for experimentation). We actively initiated an endorsement campaign that reached thousands of constituents throughout Michigan, visited with legislators in Lansing, and helped garner critical support for the bill. We also worked on this issue at the federal level, advocating for an amended 2008 Federal Farm bill that included pound seizure language from the Pet Safety & Protection Act. We will continue these efforts in 2009.

Making Euthanasia More Humane. American Humane advocated for implementation of the only humane euthanasia technique — euthanasia by injection — by supporting bills to ban the use of gas chambers in Illinois, Georgia and Pennsylvania, and responding

to a regulatory effort in North Carolina. Passage of these types of initiatives would be a significant step in improving the safety and lives of countless animals and humans.

Raising Awareness of The Link®. We worked with U.S. Rep. Susan Davis (D-Calif.) to file a House Resolution to designate September 2008 as National Link Awareness Month to raise awareness about The Link between animal cruelty and human violence. The resolution had bi-partisan support, but Congress adjourned before a vote was taken. We are greatly encouraged by Rep. Davis' commitment to reintroduce the resolution next year.

Protecting More Animals With Domestic Violence Protection Orders. American Humane advocated for critical bills to include companion animals in domestic violence protection orders in the District of Columbia and in 14 states: Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Washington and Wisconsin. The D.C. and Louisiana bills officially passed, and the other bills are expected to be filed again in 2009. We are also encouraged by the recent passage of similar legislation in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

American Humane is greatly encouraged by the increasing interest legislators across the nation express in pets-in-protective-order legislation. These bills encourage judges to include family pets in protective orders, thereby encouraging the safety of all family members.

With your help, American Humane's Office of Public Policy will keep up the fight for animals!

If you already haven't done so, please help us by signing up at www.americanhumane.org to receive Action Alerts and become a grassroots advocate for animals in your community. We appreciate your dedication. Here's looking to a banner year in 2009! ■