



Gastineau Humane Society

Dedicated to the promotion of animal welfare and
prevention of animal cruelty and suffering

March 24th, 2015

Rep. Max Gruenberg, Rep. Liz Vazquez

Dear Honorable Representatives;

As the executive director of the Gastineau Humane Society, I am writing in support of house bill 147, which would strengthen the protection of domestic animals in our state, as well as provide a means for care of animals during often lengthy court proceeding.

Alaska has long been near the top of the list for lax laws related to animal care and protection. In the last few years we have been making progress recognizing the importance of companion animals in our state. We have increased the classification of violent crimes against animals from misdemeanors to felonies, and have finally criminalized sexual contact with animals. We are headed in the right direction, but with plenty more to do.

This bill, if enacted, would offer some protections of animals in domestic violence situations. Recent studies show that nearly half of the victims who stay in violent households do so because they are afraid for their animals. Over seventy percent of domestic violence victims report that their abuser also targeted their animal. This bill allows for courts to grant custody of an animal, as well as provide for a victim's animal in protective orders.

Over the last few years there has been a number of high profile animal hoarding cases requiring long term care of as many as 160 dogs. Many animal shelters around the state are operated by not-for-profit entities. The cost of housing and caring for animals while awaiting the outcome of a cruelty or hoarding cases can be substantial and this burden should not fall on the animal shelter. This bill would ease this burden and allow the animals care to be bonded by the owner, or the animal adopted to a new family.

This measure is scheduled to be heard by Committee on Monday, March 30th. I would be happy to testify in support in person or telephonically.

Thank You,
Sincerely,

Matt Musslewhite
Executive Director, Gastineau Humane Society.

7705 Glacier Highway • Juneau • Alaska 99801 • (907) 789-0260 • www.ghspets.org

Board of Directors

President: Marina Lindsey • Vice President: Megan Rider

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MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Animal Care and Control Center

907-343-8118

Mayor Dan Sullivan

March 23, 2015

Representatives Liz Vazquez and Max Gruenberg
Alaska Capitol, Room 110
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Regarding: Support House Bill No. 147

Dear Representatives Vazquez and Gruenberg,

Anchorage Animal Care and Control (AACC) is pleased to express our support of House Bill No. 147, as authored by you both and co-sponsored by Representatives LeDoux, Lynn, Drummond, Edgmon, Guttenberg, Josephson, Ortiz, Tarr, and Tuck. This House Bill is valuable to us and similar organizations whose missions are to protect and improve the lives of animals. It holds those who commit cruelty against animals, at the very least, monetarily responsible for the animal(s) they are accused of harming.

Pets are legally acknowledged to be property, despite emotional attachment to same. Their inability to speak for or represent themselves while their legal owner is being processed for a crime of cruelty means that their overall ownership defaults to the very person charged with being cruel to them.

Anchorage Animal Care and Control takes animals into protective custody and provides necessary veterinary care, housing, feed, and environmental enrichment in cases where the owner is the party accused of abuse. Providing long term care to multiple animals can be a significant drain on monetary and staffing resources. This bill would reduce the costly expenditure incurred by us and other agencies in these cases. In many situations, the judicial process spans long periods of time for a variety of reasons. As stated before, our organization has no other recourse but to absorb the cost of the animal's care in the interim.

The following data paints a vivid picture of the aforementioned expenses:

- In 2009, AACC took in 70 cats, 8 dogs and 1 bird from one animal cruelty investigation. Court ordered restitution for medical and veterinary care was placed at over \$10,000 and boarding costs over \$66,000. Many of these animals were housed at our facility for over 350 days pending the outcome of the court case.
- In 2011, AACC held 22 cats for over 50 days pending the outcome of an animal cruelty charge. Costs for medical/veterinary care and boarding were assessed at over \$17,000.
- In 2012, AACC took custody of 39 dogs and 46 birds from one animal cruelty investigation. Our expenditures for medical/veterinary care and boarding costs were over

\$39,000. Some of these animals were at our facility over 150 days pending the outcome of the animal cruelty case.

- In 2014, AACC spent more than \$10,000 on medical/veterinary care for animals involved in animal cruelty investigations.

As of now, the defendant in these cruelty cases bears no burden financially to support the care of the animal(s) they are accused of harming. Additionally, it is difficult to ascertain the emotional cost to the animals, who are the real victims. Although many shelters do their best to provide a clean, humane and emotionally nurturing environment, nothing can replace a "real home". Prolonged court proceedings, as documented in the above referenced cases, only enable the accused to continue to harm the innocent.

Another tenet of House Bill No. 147 that is equally important to our organization is the provision that would add pets to protective orders in domestic violence cases. The Anchorage Animal Care and Control Center recognizes the relationship between domestic violence and animal cruelty.

The causal link between abuse of human beings and abuse of animals is substantial and well-documented. The most notable documentation of this correlation is *Understanding The Link Between Violence to Animals and People* by Allie Phillips, J.D. [distributed by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the National District Attorneys Association]. In this publication, the correlation is clarified as such:

- Animal abuse presents a risk of child abuse.
- Animal violence may predict future violence.
- Animal abuse is used to threaten human victims.
- Animal abuse is used to prevent families from leaving the abusive home.
- The co-occurrence of multiple forms of violence increases future violence.

In summation, Anchorage Animal Care and Control Center endorses House Bill No. 147 because it is a significant step in providing care, support, and justice to animals and agencies involved in animal cruelty investigations. Thank you very much for your leadership on House Bill No. 147.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Myra Wilson DVM".

Myra Wilson, DVM
Manager, Anchorage Animal Care and Control

Cc: Catherine Simpson
Nicoli Bailey

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Department of Health and Human Services



907-343-6718

Mayor Dan Sullivan

March 19, 2015

Representatives Max Gruenberg and Liz Vazquez
Alaska Capitol, Room 110
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: Support for House Bill 147

Dear Representatives Gruenberg and Vazquez,

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is responsible for Animal Care and Control in the Municipality of Anchorage. These services are essential to the promotion of responsible pet ownership and the protection of public health, safety and welfare of residents and animals in our community.

One of DHHS priorities is addressing cases of animal cruelty and neglect. Such cases, however, can place a significant burden on Animal Care and Control when large numbers of animals are seized for their protection and held for months or years during judicial processes. Thus, we support legislation that shifts this burden from government agencies to animal owners charged with committing crimes of animal cruelty through 1) requiring bond posting to cover the costs of caring for animals while the criminal case is resolved; and 2) providing for immediate forfeiture of the animals if the person fails to post the bond allowing for swift possible adoption rather than holding animals for extended periods of time.

Another DHHS priority is preventing Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. With our partners in the Alaska Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Intervention Project (ADVSAIP), offender bail conditions are tracked in a database accessible to police officers throughout the Alaska and are enforced through compliance checks and warrant services. Financial assistance is also provided to victims for their protection and stability. Under ADVSAIP, offenders are held accountable and victim safety is increased.

There is an established correlation between domestic violence and animal abuse. In domestic violence cases, abusers often threaten or harm pets to control, intimidate and exact revenge on their victims. Many victims delay or never leave abusive situations because of concerns over their pets' safety. Passing legislation to include animals in orders of protection in domestic violence cases is an important step in protecting both pets and people.

We support House Bill 147 as it strengthens current laws to accomplish the above priorities. Thank you for your leadership on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Melinda Freeman, Director



PO Box 240981
Anchorage, AK 99524

March 20, 2015

Representative Max Gruenberg
Alaska Capitol, Room 110
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: HB 147

Dear Representative Gruenberg,

I am writing in support of HB 147 on behalf of the Board of Directors of Friends of Pets.

For the past 25 years Friends of Pets has been active in the animal welfare community in Alaska and have worked as an organization to educate the community on the link of violence to animals and related impact to children and women. We hosted two First Strike workshops, inviting representatives from law enforcement, child welfare, animal welfare, domestic violence and the judicial system to explore the issues and potential interventions. As a result of these workshops and enhanced understanding tangible changes were made.

We have seen first hand the cruelty inflicted on animals in our community and state. Our state incidents of rape, domestic violence, substance, chemical and child abuse are nothing to be proud of and animals are often the first targets of abuse. Pets are often used as leverage to get a woman to stay in a violent home. For the past 10 years Friends of Pets has partnered with AWAIC in Anchorage to house pets belonging to women escaping domestic violence. Having pets part of protective orders assists to identify the importance of the pet in the family dynamic.

Pets are considered property and in divorce proceedings can suffer as they are used as emotional pawns between parties in dispute. Many pet owners have the emotional attachment to a pet as they would a human child and having judicial support to help make determination of the pets best interest could assist parties to think beyond their emotion of the moment.

Celebrating 25 Years of Making a Difference
1989 - 2014

We have also rescued pets with horrendous injuries due to abuse and violence. We are strong supporters of requiring the “owner” of these pets to be held accountable for the costs of recovery. One dog we rescued after suffering from a beating during a drunken rage cost Friends of Pets over \$3000.00 in rehabilitation costs.

Friends of Pets applaud all those choosing to move this bill forward. Protecting the most vulnerable among us can only enhance our collective care of each other as a society.

If we can be of additional help please don't hesitate to call.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Michele Girault
Board President
Friends of Pets



PENINSULA SPAY / NEUTER FUND

March 20, 2015

Representatives Liz Vazquez and Max Gruenberg
Alaska Capital
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Regarding: Support House Bill No. 147, Animal Welfare

The Peninsula Spay/Neuter Fund is pleased to express our support for House Bill 147, relating to the investigation of cruelty to animals, costs associated with lawfully seized animals, protective orders and permitting a judge to consider the well-being of animals when determining custody in a divorce or dissolution.

The Peninsula Spay/Neuter Fund was founded to help reduce the number of homeless, abandoned and neglected animals. It is a widespread problem and we are just one part of the solution. There are many rescue groups/caring people who see an animal in an inhumane situation and attempt to work with an owner to improve the living conditions of the animal. If this is not possible or unsuccessful and the conditions are such that the animal could be legally seized and put in the care of a custodian, the end result is often the animal being returned right back to an inhumane situation. The costs and legal fees associated with the temporary care of the animal is born by those willing to step up against inhumane treatment, trying to prevent it from continuing and recurring.

In the case of victims of abuse, it is not uncommon or surprising that victims will not leave their situation if it means leaving their animal behind. An animal becomes part of the family, security and emotional support. Strengthening laws regarding an animal in a domestic situation increases the likelihood a person will seek help. Our local crisis center accepts animals because they know this is often a determining factor in someone taking that difficult step to seek help.

Because an animal becomes part of a family and put in a situation through no fault of their own, it is our responsibility as a society to determine the best situation for that animal. How our animals are treated is a mirror of how our society views and cares for those with the least ability to determine their fate.

The Peninsula Spay/Neuter Fund supports House Bill 147 because it improves the community as a whole and especially the lives of those most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Judy Fandrei

Judy Fandrei
Founder, Peninsula Spay/Neuter Fund
Bridges Community Resource Network, Inc.
P.O. Box 1612
Soldotna, Alaska 99669
907-690-2723



Mojo's Hope
2440 E Tudor Rd. PMB 896
Anchorage, AK 99507
www.mojoshope.org
907-230-6394
mojoshope@gmail.com

3/20/15

Representative Liz Vasquez
State Capitol
120 Fourth Street
Juneau AK, 99801-1182

Dear Representative Liz Vasquez,

I am writing as an individual animal advocate in the Anchorage community and as the co-founder of Mojo's Hope, a 501c3 organization for Animals for Special Needs, in support of the proposed Animal Welfare Bill No. 147.

After being in animal welfare for over 20 years, I have observed the gamut of care in a variety of settings, ranging from wildlife centers, multi- animal facilities, shelter environments and foster settings. In these settings I have observed the struggles organizations/municipalities face due to financial strain, large volume of animals coming in with significant special needs and the challenges all endure during the crisis. I have also observed the high quality of care the animals received despite these challenges. As a local non-profit, we rely solely on donations to maintain our mission.

The implementation of this bill will prevent future animals from continual suffering as their care/needs will be met immediately when they are taken out of their present state, including but not limited to cruelty trial, protective custody and/or custody issues. While also placing accountability on the part of the owners, building a community of responsible pet ownership.

Providing quality care and safety to the animals that come from these types of situations will benefit the animals in the long run, the people whose care they are in and their future environments. House Bill No. 147 will help out on a statewide level, a municipality level and also amongst the varied reputable charitable organizations in our community.

Please feel free to contact me for further involvement with these proposed changes.

I greatly appreciate your leadership on the proposal of House Bill No. 147.

Respectfully,

Shannon Basner

Co-Founder/Volunteer

Mojo's Hope

907-230-6394

Paw Prints, Howls and Purrs

paw by paw, step by step, one soul at a time

www.facebook.com/MojosHope

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Straw-for-Dogs/326853836684>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Paw-Prints-Howls-and-Purrs/314465461920372>

<https://www.facebook.com/AlaskasKaaats>

Catherine Simpson

From: Driver Safety <driversafetywestla@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Friday, March 27, 2015 12:14 PM
To: Rep. Liz Vazquez
Subject: Best wishes on April 19,2015/ Animal Protection Legislation.

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Representative Vasquez:

Legislation protecting pets in divorce case domestic violence and other violent behaviors was long overdue. Congratulations and hopes that this very small step spills over all over the U.S.A. I am determined to take your message to our state elected representatives immediately following passage on April 19, 2015. Continue to sign-up lawmakers in support and you will be assured success. We are extremely supportive of this measure because our organization provides diversion programs and counseling to those convicted of domestic violence, animal neglect and animal cruelty, in addition to substance abuse, etc. We work very closely with the California Superior Courts under approval of our program by local law enforcement.

We have seen some of the worse cases you can possibly imagine during 35 years of operation, including but not limited to maiming, torture and killing innocent family pets.

Perhaps you could in the not too distant future travel to Los Angeles and speak to our legislators, family law judges and law enforcement

God bless your fine work on behalf of those that cannot speak for themselves.

The great Mahatma Gandhi said it best:

" The moral progress of a nation and its greatness should be judged by the way it treats its animals"

Warm personal regards

Arnold Abrams

Program Director

Family Harmony/Los Angeles/ California/ (310) 479-8353

Catherine Simpson

From: Sally Clampitt <rsclampitt@gci.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 10:27 AM
To: Catherine Simpson; Nicoli Bailey
Subject: Support for HB 147, Animal Cruelty Complaints

To:

Representative Liz Vasquez

Representative Max Gruenberg

Dear Representative Vasquez and Representative Gruenberg:

I am pleased to express our support for HB 147, “An Act relating to the investigation of animals complaints....” This legislation will go a long way toward filling loopholes in current legislation, and providing humane protection to animals during the complaint/investigation process.

Thank you very much for your hard work to create and introduce HB 147.

Respectfully,

Sally Clampitt

President

Alaska Rural Veterinary Outreach, Inc.

9138 Arlon St., #A3-584

Anchorage, AK 99507

www.akrvo.org ~ info@akrvo.org

Toll-free – 855-259-2786

Anchorage local – 907-349-2786