



Bill T. Teague
2515 Gramercy Street
Houston, TX 77030-3107
(713) 432-0238 - home
(713) 791-6222 - office
(713) 790-1007 - fax
bteague@giveblood.org-E-mail

MEMORANDUM

TO: BRC Board

FROM: Bill T. Teague
AKC Legal Liaison

SUBJECT: Legislative Liaison Report – May 2002

DATE: May 15, 2002

The big news this month is the defeat of the Puppy Protection Act (PPA). After an eight month long effort, Congress removed the PPA from the Farm Bill. If you don't believe grass roots efforts work, just take a look at this success! My special thanks goes to each of you who contacted your congressional members or in any way supported these efforts. Since this Bill has been discussed extensively in previous communications, we'll not detail it here. However, if you need any additional information, feel free to contact me or Stephanie Pier in the AKC office at (919) 816-3720 or e-mail doglaw@akc.org. As always, this report will be added to the website under Club Stuff

In state legislation, Legislators have again been very busy. For example in **Texas**, the Arlington City Council introduced an ordinance that would permit the city to seize dogs that are deemed dangerous immediately upon the determination. Current owners of dangerous dogs could also be required to give up their animals if they fall out of compliance on the safety regulations such as leashing and muzzling. Once a dog is surrendered, a judge will determine if the dog should be euthanized or if it can be returned to its owner.

The City of Daisetta is considering a breed-specific ordinance and has called the AKC for assistance. The AKC Canine Legislation Department explained that such legislation is prohibited by state law in Texas and provided officials with dangerous dog information packets for use in their work to develop a fair, reasonable alternative.

In **Oklahoma**, Ponca City officials are considering a breed-specific dangerous dog ordinance despite the fact state law prohibits such legislation. The proposal came in response to a "pit bull" attack on a young boy. In **New Mexico**, an onerous animal control ordinance is being considered in Valencia County that would require owners of unaltered dogs and cats whose animals had been impounded to pay a \$75 "sterilization deposit" in addition to the regular \$25 impoundment fee. Owners must also license their animals annually at a cost of \$5 per altered dog or cat and \$25 per unaltered animal. Additionally, owners of unsterilized animals would be charged a \$100 yearly permit fee. The measure contains provisions for the keeping of a dangerous dog, but the definition of "dangerous" and "vicious" are vague.

As usual, **California** leads the nation in the number of dog ordinances. I'm sure you're aware of the high profile jury verdict in March of a San Francisco lawyer. She was convicted of second-degree murder after her dog mauled a woman to death last year. Jurors found the woman guilty because they believe she knew her dog to be dangerous but did nothing to properly restrain the animal from harming others. The verdict, only the third one of its kind in U.S. history,

could certainly have a negative impact on dog fanciers as landlords and insurance companies nationwide reevaluate liability issues related to dog ownership. Some dog owners have already reported not being able to obtain homeowners insurance or finding housing that will accept dogs.

Incidents like the tragedy in San Francisco remind us that animal control laws must be strongly enforced. Leash laws, clear guidelines for dealing with dangerous dogs – regardless of breed – and increased public education efforts to promote responsible dog ownership are all positive ways to protect communities from dangerous dogs. Owners should not be judged on whether they will be good tenants or insurance customers based on the fact they own a certain size or breed of dog.

As always, these are only highlights of the legislative activities, so if you need additional information, please don't hesitate to let us know. It continues to be an honor and a pleasure serving the Club in this capacity!

HUNT\May2002ReportBRC\tjc

cc: Angelia Taylor