

New England State Issues July 2020

By [AKC Government Relations](#)

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State Issues: News from the New England State Capitols

Connecticut – A Task Force on Police Transparency and Accountability has proposed three subcommittees to provide recommendations on improving police interactions, assessing resource allocations and collecting data on police actions. A final report and legislative recommendations are expected by December. AKC GR is monitoring to evaluate whether the utilization of working police K-9s is addressed.

Massachusetts – In June, the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus filed [HD 5128](#), Relative to Saving Black Lives and Reforming Public Safety, which includes a provision prohibiting the utilization of working police K-9s. Next, Senate Ways and Means released [SB 2800](#), a law enforcement reform proposal designating the release of a dog as a prohibited use of force unless de-escalation techniques are attempted and fail, and the use of force is necessary and proportionate to the threat of imminent harm. AKC GR's concern is the text in both bills is a mischaracterization of how working police K-9s are utilized. On July 13, AKC GR co-hosted with two expert K-9 police handlers an educational program for lawmakers on the value of purpose-bred working dogs, police K-9 certifications, policies and procedures used to protect public safety, which resulted in acceptable K-9 text in the Senate's final bill, [SB 2820](#). The House adopted its proposal, including the K-9 text of concern. AKC GR and the Boston Police Department's K-9 Academy have submitted a letter to the conference committee requesting adoption of the Senate's final text in any legislation to be sent to the Governor's desk.

Massachusetts – On May 8, 2020, the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government released a committee re-draft of multiple animal bills that did not include the [HB 1822](#) proposed ban on dogs outside and unattended opposed by AKC GR, dog owners, breeders, sportsmen and police officers that have dogs that would be negatively impacted. The committee re-draft, [SB 2760](#) has been sent to Senate Ways and Means Committee where additional dog legislation is under consideration. It would make significant harmful changes to current law if enacted. AKC GR worked with Massachusetts advocates to create a bill summary outlining all the concerns.

Massachusetts – Two pet retail ban bills [HB 800](#) and [SB 175](#) were re-drafted by the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure. The re-draft, [SB 2592](#), Reforming the Sale of Cats, Dogs and Rabbits in the Commonwealth does not ban pet stores from selling dogs or cats. Instead, it establishes health certificate requirements, consumer protections and standards for all animal transfers whether made by a pet store, animal shelter, rescue or breeder. AKC GR is generally pleased with [SB 2592](#) and will advocate for clarifying amendments when the General Court resumes normal session procedures.

Massachusetts – [SB 2158](#) would create a civil infraction for presenting a pet dog as a service dog and authorize the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development to prepare and make available to businesses upon request: (i) a decal suitable for posting in a front window or door stating that service dogs are welcome and that misrepresentation of a service dog is a violation of Massachusetts law; and (ii) a brochure detailing permissible questions a business

owner may ask to determine whether a dog is a service dog, acceptable answers to those questions, and guidelines defining unacceptable behavior. It was favorably reported from the Joint Federal Affairs Committee on April 21, 2020 and sent to Senate Ways and Means for consideration. AKC GR supports this bill.

Massachusetts – [HB 4230](#) and [SB 2423](#) (“Nero’s bill”) would allow EMTs to treat and transport law enforcement K9s injured in the line of duty. Grassroots support from the Massachusetts dog clubs has been significant. AKC GR continues to work with bill sponsors to pass the legislation this session.

Massachusetts – [SB 595](#) would prohibit insurance companies from denying homeowners or renters insurance, or from requiring a higher premium based upon breed, size or weight of a dog owned. On April 27, 2020, the bill was reported favorably by the Joint Committee on Financial Services Bill and was referred to the committee on Senate Ways and Means. The Massachusetts Federation of Dog Clubs and AKC GR support it.

New Hampshire – [HB 1234](#) swiftly incorporated multiple bills pending before COVID-19 shortened the legislative session. Included was the establishment of a state Animal Health Certificate Database to track any transfer of a dog, cat, or ferret by those required to submit health certificates to the Department of Agriculture. Although improvements to the original bill had been made, the text included in [HB 1234](#) had limited sanctions for breaches of data confidentiality and other issues. Governor Sununu vetoed [HB 1234](#) on July 28, 2020.

Vermont – The Vermont Legislature committed to review formal recommendations by the Vermont Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board. After informal discussions, including with the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs with input by AKC GR, the House Agriculture Committee introduced [HB 940](#) establishing animal cruelty investigation, training and certification for animal control officers. The bill has been posted to the notice calendar for House consideration. AKC GR will continue to work closely with the Federation on bill text.

Vermont – [HB 636](#) requires a dog trainer to inform his or her client of the methods and equipment that will be used to train the client’s dog and of the risks and benefits of those methods and equipment, and to require the dog trainer to obtain the client’s consent to that training. AKC GR plans to contact the bill sponsor to understand the rationale for the measure once the pandemic emergency subsides.

Vermont – Animal rescues and shelters are [asking Governor Scott](#) for authority via emergency orders to resume importing animals into the state and considering breeding animals to meet the demand for pets. In 2016, registration and oversight requirements for animal importers and shelters were eliminated. The Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs sent a letter to the Governor on May 21st stating that public health and safety requires registration, vaccination and quarantine by these organizations. AKC GR issued [an alert](#) encouraging emails be sent to the Governor in support of the federation’s letter and forwarded a similar request to him on June 3, 2020. No action has been taken by the Governor.

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