

New England State Capitol Issues August 2020

By [AKC Government Relations](#)

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.

Connecticut – The state Department of Agriculture released draft regulations for animal importers and shelters. AKC GR reviewed the proposal, issued an alert encouraging recommendations for strengthening the proposed rules, and issued a formal comment to the commissioner. The Department of Agriculture is currently reviewing submitted comments.

Massachusetts – In June, the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus filed [HD 5128](#), which included a provision prohibiting the utilization of working police K-9s. Senate Ways and Means released [SB 2800](#), 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. Both bills mischaracterize how working police K-9s are utilized. On July 13, AKC GR hosted an educational program for Massachusetts lawmakers with two expert K-9 police handlers on the value of purpose-bred working dogs, and police K-9 certifications, policies and procedures used to protect public safety. This effort resulted in acceptable K-9 text in the Senate's final bill, [SB 2820](#). The House-passed legislation differs significantly and a conference committee is working now to determine the final version. AKC GR continues to work with legislators, police departments, and key grassroots contacts to ensure the conference committee's final product respects the appropriate use of police K-9s. The presentation can be viewed [here](#) with passcode 2L#Arer2.

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](#) 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.

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 – The Department of Agriculture is seeking tools to implement a health certificate requirement for animal transfers enacted in as part of a 2019 law. That law called for a statewide electronic animal records database where veterinarians, shelters, pet vendors and hobby breeders would

be required to submit health certificates and rabies vaccination records. Some of these requirements came back into legislative play this year in [HB 1234](#) as part of a tactic to consolidate bills and bypass procedural requirements. AKC GR and NH DOGS used this opportunity to request that the definition of licensed “pet vendor” be based upon transfer of 35 dogs per year, not 25 dogs as previously enacted. The Senate committee declined. HB 1234 was vetoed in late July.

New Hampshire – Governor Sununu has established a Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability, Community and Transparency, which is considering a statewide uniform system for reporting police misconduct. AKC GR testified virtually on August 20th requesting that third parties contracted to support enforcement of animal control measures be held accountable for determining proper cause before bringing charges and not acting in bad faith.

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 was removed from the House calendar and recommitted to the Agriculture Committee. 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 a consent to that training. AKC GR plans to contact the bill sponsor to understand the rationale for the measure once the pandemic emergency subsidies.

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. At least one rescue has resumed transport by following state quarantine guidelines. AKC GR will maintain communication with the Governor’s office to address this issue.

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