

New England State Legislative Issues September 2020

AKC GR – last month the AKC Government Relations Department announced the formation of new Anti-breeder harassment taskforce and its webpage with resource information and a reporting form. If you have been the target of recent behavior intended to target, intimidate, retaliate or harass, please visit the webpage at <https://akcgr.org/akc/harassment>

Connecticut – In September, the Police Transparency and Accountability Taskforce is hosting multiple listening sessions allowing the public to share recommendations for law enforcement reforms. More information is available at <https://www.ctpolicetransparency.com/>. AKC GR is monitoring developments for any legislative recommendations relative to police K-9s.

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 significantly differs 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 – In mid-August the NH Fish and Game commission met and discussed a [Voices of Wildlife petition](#) requesting the repeal of regulations allowing beagle clubs to maintain hares. AKC GR submitted a letter of opposition to the petition and spoke with Commissioner Green who had visited the Claremont Beagle club and found no wrongdoing on the part of the club. The Commissioner motioned to reject the petition and move forward with one change to the current rule that would allow the taking of one hare to be inspected by a non-partial veterinarian every year. This motion carried unanimously.

New Hampshire – A Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability, Community and Transparency has finalized its report making recommendations to the Governor and state legislature, including establishing a statewide system for reporting police misconduct. AKC GR testified virtually on August 20th requesting that third parties contracted to support animal control enforcement be held accountable for determining proper cause before bringing charges and not acting in bad faith. This is included in the Commission's [final document](#).

Rhode Island – The Senate Commission on Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights has met twice to review law enforcement reform measures being considered by other states. A survey of law enforcement department disciplinary actions over the past five years has been distributed and tallied. AKC GR virtually attended the Commission's meeting on September 16 to monitor for any legislative recommendations impacting police K-9s.

Vermont – The House Agriculture Committee introduced [HB 940](#) establishing animal cruelty investigation, training and certification for animal control officers and it was placed on the House calendar for action in March. In June, the bill was recommitted to the committee for additional changes. AKC GR will continue to work closely with the Federation on recommending 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. It also requires 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 – The House and Senate Judiciary committees are hosting September virtual meetings to discuss making changes to police use of force and justifiable homicide statutory provisions. AKC GR is monitoring these discussions and will provide information regarding appropriate police K-9 deployment, as appropriate.

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.