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New England State Issues

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By [AKC Government Relations](#)

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State Issues: News from the New England State Capitols

Connecticut – A Police Transparency and Accountability Taskforce has been gathering public input before issuing recommendations for law enforcement reforms. AKC GR testified that standards of accountability for law enforcement misconduct should include municipal animal control officers as they are identified as law enforcement personnel. Submitted testimony requested the taskforce review and include animal control officers, including agents appointed as humane society employees, in their misconduct oversight and disciplinary recommendations to the legislature. The taskforce is looking to issue recommendations for short term objectives by December and for more comprehensive changes in 2021.

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 all comments submitted.

Massachusetts – Bills were introduced in the House and Senate that would ban or severely limit the use of police K-9s and mischaracterize how working police K-9s are utilized. AKC GR hosted a 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. This resulted in acceptable K-9 text in the Senate's final bill, [SB 2820](#). The House version differs greatly, and a conference committee will determine the final version. AKC GR continues to work with legislators, police departments, and key contacts to ensure the final bill respects the appropriate use of K-9s.

Massachusetts – On September 28, the Senate Chair of the Joint Judiciary committee requested an extension until November 12, 2020 to act on SB 989. The bill would create inappropriate shelter, outdoor, and tethering restrictions. It also places civil fines for neglect of other domestic animals into provisions of law specific to dogs. AKC GR and constituents of the committee chairman met virtually with legal counsel and have been advised that a re-draft of the bill, if released, will not include onerous dog provisions. AKC GR will continue to monitor.

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 – Governor Sununu convened a Law Enforcement Accountability, Community and Transparency Commission in June to review oversight and training standards before making recommendations for change. AKC GR testified regarding the need to hold animal control officers accountable to the same standard and discipline for law enforcement misconduct; such as making unsubstantiated charges and acting in bad faith. The AKC GR recommendation was included in the [Taskforce’s Final Report](#) of Recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.

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.

Rhode Island – The Senate Commission on Law Enforcement Officers’ Bill of Rights continues to meet and review the system of disciplinary review and 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 is virtually attending the Commission’s meetings 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 has concerns that the draft eliminates the need for humane officers to be appointed by employing humane societies incorporated in Vermont and fails to specify the limits of officers’ authority. AKC GR will continue to work closely with the Federation on recommending bill text to the committee before the bill is re-filed.

Vermont – Two bills, [SB 124](#) and [SB 119](#), which make changes to police training, use of force and other law enforcement statutory provisions became law on October 7, 2020. AKC GR is pleased there were no concerns about the appropriate deployment of police K-9s raised.

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 continue to monitor.

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