

# New England State Issues May 2021

By [AKC Government Relations](#)

May 14, 2021

**Connecticut** – [HB 6318](#) would update Connecticut's statutes to align with federal service animal definitions and requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It also would educate the public regarding the differences between service, emotional support, and therapy animals and raise awareness about the rights and responsibilities of these animal owners. AKC GR submitted testimony in support. The House passed the bill and it is now on the Senate calendar waiting for a vote.

**Connecticut** – [HB 6504](#) would require a veterinary examination of animals brought into the state by animal shelters, among other helpful provisions. AKC GR issued an [alert](#) and testified in support of it. On April 14, 2021, it was added to the House calendar and a vote is pending.

**Connecticut** – [SB 123](#) would increase the penalties for injuring or killing a police K-9 or volunteer search and rescue K-9. AKC GR supports the bill, and it was voted favorably by the Joint Public Safety Committee on March 4, 2021. AKC GR posted an [update](#) urging supportive emails as the bill is now on the Senate calendar.

**Connecticut** – [SB 923](#) would require the Connecticut Sentencing Commission to review the state's animal cruelty laws and make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly. AKC and the Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs and Responsible Dog Owners (CFDRDO) are concerned that members of the commission do not have animal welfare experience. Testimony was submitted by AKC GR and CFDRDO, consistent with that of the Department of Agriculture, requesting collaboration with the department and subject matter experts. AKC GR had a phone call with the Executive Director of the commission to discuss the scope of such a review and secured a commitment to obtain input from animal welfare subject matter experts such as AKC and CFDRDO. The bill has passed the Senate and is now on the House calendar for a vote.

**Maine** – The Maine Department of Agriculture has filed an omnibus bill, [LD 103](#), that would allow it to employ any person considered necessary to assist in any response to a natural or man-made disaster affecting animals; appoint to the Animal Welfare Advisory Council a person who is a pet food supplier and an attorney with experience in the state court system; and change the rabies vaccination requirement for a dog over 3 months of age instead of 6 months. The bill also provides for the revocation of animal control officer certification if the officer refuses or intentionally fails to perform the officer's statutory duties. AKC GR and the Maine Federation of Dog Clubs spoke to the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to express concerns with the rabies vaccination requirement at 3 months. An amendment providing an additional 30 days after a puppy turns 3 months to get the initial rabies vaccination was adopted before the committee favorably released the bill. Concerns exist among dog owners that getting timely veterinarian appointments is currently a challenge due to the pandemic. The bill has passed both the House and the Senate.

**Maine** – [LD 1265](#) would remove the permission for hunting dogs to be at large; and prohibit hunting coyote at night or with dogs or bait. AKC GR issued an alert and testified before the Joint Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in opposition together with sportsmen and women. The committee voted unanimously the bill ought not to pass.

**Massachusetts** – [HD 326](#) would authorize the emergency transport and treatment of police K-9s injured in the line of duty. AKC GR issued an [alert](#) asking Massachusetts residents to contact their lawmakers and request that they co-sponsor the bill. Representative Xiarios' office reports a resulting significant number of signatures. In addition, Senator Montigny has also re-filed the bill in the Senate, [SD 1177](#) and has filed the bill as amendment #580 to the Senate budget, which will be debated starting May 25th. Supporters are meeting virtually on May 21, 2021 to discuss a plan of action.

**Massachusetts** – There are multiple bills impacting dogs scheduled for public hearing on May 19, 2021 before the Joint Judiciary Committee. For a summary and AKC's position, please review the [alert](#) issued May 13, 2021.

**New Hampshire** – On February 3, 2021, AKC GR testified with NH DOGS in support of [HB 249](#), which would authorize animal shelters to own or lease a facility rather than be required to own it. It also clarifies which exemptions apply to animal shelters for obtaining health certificates and requires that shelters contact the microchip owner of record before any transfer of the animal. The House Environment and Agriculture Committee [amended](#) and unanimously voted to favorably release the bill on February 18, 2021. [Read AKC GR's alert](#). It has passed the House and been sent to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and AKC GR testified in support.

**New Hampshire** – Prior to enactment of a 2019 law, a commercial breeder in the state who transferred fewer than 50 dogs in a year was not required to get municipal zoning authorization as a prerequisite for state licensure. However, in 2019, legislation was enacted that removed the state's definition of commercial breeder and classified a person as a pet vendor if they transfer 25 dogs in a 12-month period. The 2019 change required all applicants for a pet vendor license to obtain municipal zoning authorization. As a result of this legislative change, several dog breeders that were previously licensed were not granted municipal zoning authorization and have been unable to obtain the state's new pet vendor license. This has resulted in the violation of due process for those dog breeders. [HB 250](#) seeks to address these issues by (1) raising the minimum transfer threshold to 35 dogs, and (2) "grandfathering" those breeders who were not previously required to petition local authorities for authorization before obtaining a state license so they will not need local authorization before applying to operate as a pet vendor. In early February, AKC GR and the New Hampshire Dog Owners of the Granite State testified in support of HB 250 in the House Environment and Agriculture Committee. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee amended the bill by lowering the dog transfer threshold to 30 and voted it favorably. The bill passed the Senate on May 13.

**New Hampshire** – To deter dog theft and illegal tampering with tracking dog collars, [HB 338](#) would increase the penalty from a misdemeanor offense to a class B felony. AKC GR testified in support of this bill on February 10, 2021. In March, the committee released an amended bill that would increase the penalty each time an individual stole a dog from a criminal misdemeanor through a class A felony for a third offense. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee heard from AKC GR and others in support, then amended the House passed bill by increasing the crime from a misdemeanor to a felony after two offenses and preserving the penalty for illegally tampering with tracking dog collars. The bill has been voted favorably by the Senate committee and NH DOGS is comfortable with this change. The bill passed the Senate on May 13.

**New Hampshire** – Two amended bills regarding the creation of a state-wide animal records database continue to move. AKC GR and NH DOGS expressed concerns about [HB 532](#) to the House Environment and Agriculture Committee when it considered the bill in late January. The committee favorably released an amended version of the bill that addressed AKC's and NH DOGS' concerns. HB 532 was later considered by the House Ways and Means Committee, during which AKC GR explained the rationale for the changes. [Read more about HB 532 here](#). House Ways and Means worked with Representatives to insert the committee's amended text in the House budget, HB 2, which has passed and been sent to Senate Finance. Meanwhile, in early February, the Senate Finance Committee hosted a hearing on [SB 127](#), an appropriations bill that also featured the unamended animal records database text of HB 532. During the hearing, AKC GR requested that the committee adopt the same changes as were made to the House bill. The Senate Finance Committee responded favorably to the requests from AKC GR, NH DOGS, and New Hampshire dog owners by adopting an amended version of SB 127 that largely reflects the acceptable animal records database text adopted by the House. The Senate and House Finance Committees are now working on budget negotiations and will resolve the differences in text.

**New Hampshire** – [SB 17](#) would, among provisions, authorize municipalities to adopt ordinances permitting dogs outside at brew pubs. AKC supports this provision and submitted testimony on March 23, 2021, to the House Commerce and Consumer Protection committee. The committee has an executive session scheduled for May 13, 2021 to vote on the bill.

**New Hampshire** – [SB 122](#) would, among other provisions, increase the penalties from a misdemeanor to a felony for a person who injures or kills; or allow their animal to injure or kill, a working service dog. AKC GR submitted testimony in support. Subsequently, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary voted favorably to release an amended bill that preserves this section. The bill has passed the Senate and is being reviewed by the House Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

**New Hampshire** – [SB 110](#) would allow only a citizen given permission by law enforcement officer and with a witness present to open a motor vehicle and release an animal in heat distress. These protections are the result of AKC GR's advocacy with the bill sponsor and identification of concerns, such as theft,

last session. The bill was approved by the Senate, but the House Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety has voted it inexpedient to legislate.

**Rhode Island** – [SB 319](#) was introduced in May and would authorize an officer to hold an animal rescued from a motor vehicle for dangerous conditions up to 72 hours or until a court arraignment could be scheduled. At the court hearing, permanent custody could be awarded to another. AKC GR submitted written testimony noting that leaving an animal in an unattended motor vehicle may present a danger but, as an unintentional act it may not warrant the loss of one's property rights without a proper trial and finding of guilt.

**Rhode Island** – [SB 308](#) would increase the fines and penalties for a violator of the animal cruelty laws when committed in the presence of a minor.

**Rhode Island** – [SB 309](#) would amend the animal cruelty statute to add a new subsection banning ownership of animals for life if convicted of killing or torturing an animal.

**Rhode Island** – A late filed bill, [HB 6283](#) would establish a process for the donation of unused medications for use by nonprofit, state and local facilities by owners of animals.

**Rhode Island** – Re-filed from 2019, [HB 5040](#) would establish an animal cruelty registry prohibiting offenders from owning animals in the future by requiring pet sellers and shelters to review the registry before transferring an animal. Violations would result in significant fines. AKC GR joined the Rhode Island American Civil Liberties Union to testify at the February 9, 2021 hearing and expressed concerns that registries have been found ineffective at preventing animal cruelty, and instead and encouraged the committee to consider using more effective tools. The committee has held the bill for further study.

**Rhode Island** – On March 10, 2021, the House Judiciary Committee heard testimony on [HB 5569](#), which would allow the district court to include pets in a temporary protective order for domestic violence victims. The family court has this authority already. AKC GR submitted testimony in support of this measure to protect pets from violence in domestic situations. The committee has held the bill for further study.

**Rhode Island** – [HB 5577](#) would authorize court-appointed legal advocates for animals. Appointing lawyers for animals "in the interests of justice" implies animals have legal non-human rights. AKC GR issued an [alert](#) and testified in opposition to the bill. The House committee has retained the bill to review it further. On March 4, the Senate President introduced identical bill [SB 534](#), and the Senate Minority Leader introduced another companion bill, [SB 601](#). AKC GR developed a fact sheet, and Rhode Island dog clubs and members are contacting their lawmakers to express opposition to these bills. AKC GR has reached out to other affected stakeholders such as the Department of Environmental Management, Attorney General and the Rhode Island Supreme Court. After issuing an [alert](#), AKC GR joined the Providence County Kennel Club President and Rhode Island Kennel Club Legislative Liaison testifying in opposition at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on May 6, 2021. Also in opposition, are the RI American Civil Liberties Union and the RI court system. Senate legal counsel has contacted AKC GR and a meeting with the Senate President, sponsor of S. 534, has again been requested.

**Rhode Island** – [HB 5580](#), would authorize courts to use criteria for child custody disputes in awarding custody of a pet upon the dissolution of marriage. AKC GR submitted written testimony in opposition to courts using criteria governing child custody disputes for animals. The committee has held the bill for further study.

**Rhode Island** – [HB 5617](#) would place a lifetime ban on the possession of animals for anyone convicted of serious animal cruelty. Testimony was submitted for the March 3, 2021 hearing by the House Judiciary Committee noting the bill fails to address how the convicted would be monitored for the duration of their lifetime. The bill may also unintentionally remove a tool judges have to obtain agreement to engage in mental health counseling by a defendant whose conduct was the result of mental illness. The committee has held the bill for further study.

**Rhode Island** – [HB 5736](#) would ban tethering a dog outside for more than 30 minutes when the temperature is below 32 degrees or above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. AKC GR testified in opposition before the House Judiciary Committee on March 9, 2021, because current law provides that animal control officers may address any weather situation where a dog might be at risk of harm. Adding specific temperatures to the law could diminish protections for any breed that tolerates only moderate climates and punish owners of breeds that thrive in lower temperatures. The committee has held the bill for further study.

**Vermont** – [HB 316](#) would clarify that a hunter training dogs or using dogs to hunt black bear must retain visual and verbal control over the dogs while hunting. This is in response to two serious bear hunting dog attacks of people hiking. It has been forwarded to the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife for review. On March 30 and 31, 2021, the committee heard testimony from invited guests on this

bill and three others with impact on hunting and sporting activities. [HB 167](#) would change the composition and role of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife board; [HB 172](#) would ban bear hunting with dogs and create a nuisance wildlife trapping license and [HB 411](#) would enact wildlife wanton waste restrictions. AKC GR submitted written testimony to the committee in response to questions about dog owner liability during their deliberations and issued an [alert](#) to Vermont clubs.

**Vermont** – The House Agriculture Committee released [HB 421](#), which would provide training and oversight for animal control officers. The House of Representatives voted favorably and sent the bill to the Senate for consideration on March 12, 2021. AKC GR supports the bill and worked closely with the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs to advocate the adoption of an amendment further narrowing the definition of “humane societies”. AKC GR and the Federation are grateful to the Senate Agriculture and Forestry committee for adopting this amendment prior to passing the bill in the Senate. On May 7, 2021, the House of Representatives agreed with the Senate’s version and passed it. AKC GR has issued an [alert](#) requesting emails in support to the Governor.

## **Stacey Ober, J.D.**

Legislative Analyst & Community Outreach, New England Region  
Government Relations

**AKC Taskforce Addresses Shortage of US Bred/Trained Explosive Detection Dogs**

Learn More at <https://www.akc.org/akc-detection-dog-task-force/>



t: 919-816-3348 | e: [stacey.ober@akc.org](mailto:stacey.ober@akc.org)

AKC’s website: [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)

AKC GR’s website: [www.akcgr.org](http://www.akcgr.org)