

# New England State Capitol Issues March 2023

Connecticut – The Judiciary Committee raised [SB 1060](#) that would expand the court’s authority to appoint an attorney to represent animals generally. The goal of animal rights activists is to give animals the same rights and privileges as people by changing the legal classification of animals from property to “legal beings”. AKC opposes SB 1060, issued [an alert](#) and testified in opposition on March 1 with the Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs and Responsible Dog Owners (CFDRDO). Learn more [here](#).

Connecticut – [HB 6714](#) would redefine the crime of sexual contact with an animal, require that veterinarians report suspected incidents of animal cruelty, and prohibit persons convicted of animal cruelty or having sexual contact with an animal from possessing or working with animals for a period of five years. AKC is concerned the proposed definition of “sexual contact with an animal” could be interpreted as prohibiting routine canine reproduction procedures, such as artificial insemination. AKC submitted March 1 testimony seeking a clarifying amendment.

Connecticut – Established in [Public Act No. 22-54](#), the Department of Agriculture convened a workgroup to explore a state-wide dog license portal last year. The Department submitted draft legislation raised by the Joint Environment Committee as HB 6611. An additional benefit of the electronic dog license portal proposed is a flat dog license fee whether a dog is intact or not. The Department requested the committee make changes to HB 6611 to mirror the working group’s draft and AKC and CFDRDO submitted testimony in support of those changes for the public hearing on February 15. The platform will allow confidentiality for individuals with privacy protections in place. An amended HB 6611 was voted favorably on March 3, and after final changes were made by the Department, amended HB 6611 was released.

Connecticut – [SB 1069](#) would have made many problematic changes to the domestic animal laws. As introduced, it would have expanded the definition of “animal”, defined “grooming facility” as any vehicle or trailer: and have repealed a definition of “kennel” that allowed for personal, non-commercial kennels. Connecticut dog owners successfully impressed upon the committee their concerns with the provisions. Together with the CFDRDO, AKC has presented a list of recommended amendments for consideration by the Joint Environment Committee.

Connecticut – HB 5450 would prohibit discrimination in insurance underwriting based on the breed of a homeowner’s dog. Representative Nuccio has filed this bill after successfully getting a model act adopted by the National Council of Insurance

Lawmakers last year. AKC sent [an alert](#) noting these protections had been raised by committee for a hearing on February 16 as [HB 6635](#). AKC, multiple dog clubs and members submitted testimony in support with CFDRDO. The committee voted favorably an [amended HB 6635](#) on March 16 that would impact laws relating to damage by dogs to people or property as described in this [update](#).

Connecticut – [HB 5215](#) would establish a taskforce, including a representative of AKC, to develop recommendations for legislation to address the epidemic of domestic dog attacks in the state and to expedite appeals of animal control officer orders and minimize the time impounded animals are held at taxpayer expense. AKC testified in support at the public hearing on February 15 and requested that CFDRDO be added to the taskforce. The Environment Committee voted favorably on March 1 with a commitment to add additional taskforce members in a House floor amendment. AKC is working with CFDRDO to get them included.

Connecticut – [SB 932](#) would authorize the emergency treatment and transport of police K9s injured in the line of duty along with other provisions to protect law enforcement K-9s. AKC issued an [alert in support](#) on February 3, 2023, and submitted written testimony for the hearing on February 14. On March 16, the committee unanimously voted the bill favorably.

Connecticut – [SB 729](#) would establish the Siberian Husky as the CT state dog. AKC submitted a letter of support to the committee. An omnibus bill including this provision was raised as [HB 6822](#) and heard on March 6. The committee voted the bill favorably on March 22.

Connecticut – [SB 53](#) would require veterinarians to report suspected cases of animal cruelty and neglect to the state. The Joint Committee on Environment held a public hearing on January 30, 2023, and AKC is monitoring the measure.

Connecticut – [SB 976](#) would mandate health insurance coverage for certain conditions, including the need to purchase a trained service animal. AKC supports the training and use of dogs by humans, whose lives are enriched by dogs' performing essential services and submitted written testimony in support for the February 14 public hearing. See the [alert](#) for more details.

Maine – [LD 1216](#) would establish an animal cruelty taskforce to provide a coalition of trained professionals to assist with and enhance the enforcement of animal cruelty laws.

It was requested by the Maine Animal Control Association and the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee has scheduled a hearing for April 3.

Maine – [LD 1234](#), introduced March 21, would require the Department of Public Safety to reimburse authorized handlers of retired law enforcement dogs that were used in service by the State Police up to \$5,000 per year for health care expenses of their dogs. It has been assigned to the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

Maine – [LD 350](#) prohibits the cancellation or nonrenewal of a property insurance policy solely on the basis of a policyholder's ownership of certain breeds of dogs. The bill also prohibits an increase in the premium for the policy. [An alert](#) has been issued, and AK GR testified in support at a February 14 hearing. Opposition to the bill came from the insurance industry and the committee has requested the industry share what evidence they use to determine dog breed risk analysis. At the March 23 committee work session an attorney for the Bureau of Insurance offered to post on the agency website the policy forms of the ten largest insurance groups in Maine, representing 82% of the market, regarding what carriers do with respect to dogs. With this consumer education, the committee voted to table the bill.

Maine – [LD 679](#) would require a tenant to designate an authorized person to retrieve an animal from the tenant's rental unit in the event of the tenant's death or incapacitation or the tenant's abandonment of the animal. The bill also requires the landlord to surrender the animal to an animal shelter, an animal control officer or a police officer if the authorized person fails to retrieve the animal. The Joint Committee on Judiciary scheduled a hearing for March 23. [Read more](#)

Maine – Referencing AKC's Canine Good Citizen program, [LD 888](#) provides a system to allow a trained dog and handler to accompany a witness in courtroom appearances and other interactions where criminal justice is administered. An [alert](#) was issued and on March 15, AKC testified in support during the Judiciary Committee's public hearing. During the March 22 work session, the judiciary explained that judges currently enjoy discretion and could allow a courthouse facility dog, but that the policy may not have been widely understood. The judiciary is now creating a specific policy to be made available. Although LD 888 would authorize use of the dogs from the investigative stage to the actual trial, the committee voted to table it.

Maine – [LD 1211](#) would require that the Commissioner of Public Safety develop programs to train and certify animal control officers rather than the Commissioner of

Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. It was introduced on March 8. A public hearing is scheduled for April 3.

Maine –Introduced on March 7, [LD 1068](#) would ban the hunting of animals in enclosed areas and repeal the law that permits the establishment, operation and use of commercial large game shooting areas. AKC reviewed the text with the Northeast Beagle Gundog Federation and determined that there is no harm to beagle club training and field trials with hare. AKC will continue to monitor.

Massachusetts – [HB 314](#) would provide consumer protections at dog day care businesses and is supported by multiple animal welfare organizations, including AKC. It has been referred to the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure.

Massachusetts – [HB 2019](#) has been re-filed as “Ollie’s Law” and would impose requirements such as staffing ratios for boarding, training, dog day care, breeding and personal kennels. It also would create a new definition for “personal breeder kennel” as anyone with more than 4 intact female dogs. Personal breeder kennels and commercial breeder kennels would be held to the same future regulations. It has been referred to the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee.

Massachusetts – [SB 1056](#) would, among other provisions, require a minimum of 100 square feet per dog for outdoor enclosures and ban the kenneling of any dog outside unattended for more than 5 hours or from 10pm to 6am. AKC opposes the measure as introduced. It has been referred to Joint Judiciary Committee.

Massachusetts – [HB 310](#) is a re-filed bill that would require pet groomers be licensed by the state and comply with regulations related to the safety, sanitation and operation of a pet grooming business. AKC is concerned that the proposed definition of “pet groomer” does not make an exception for professional dog handlers traveling to Massachusetts to exhibit a dog. It has been referred to the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure.

New Hampshire – [SB 268](#) would allow for pre-hospital treatment and transportation for police canines injured in the line of duty. The Senate Committee on Judiciary heard testimony from AKC and other supporters on March 7 and after expanding the protections to working dogs at other state agencies, immediately voted the bill favorably from committee. Details are in this [alert](#). The Senate chamber voted it favorably on

March 16. The House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee has scheduled a hearing for March 29 as noted in this [update](#).

New Hampshire – [HB 37](#) is a re-filed bill that would establish a study on best practices for companion animal groomers. At the February 7 public hearing, lawmakers expressed a desire to ensure animals' safety and groomer compliance with best practices without having to create a state occupational license. The House Environment and Agriculture Committee retained the bill and requested the Department of Agriculture post an educational bulletin on how to find a responsible groomer.

New Hampshire – [HB 258](#) would establish a certification for animal chiropractors. Amendments were approved and unanimously adopted at an executive session on March 8. Details are [here](#). The House chamber voted the bill favorably on March 16. It has been referred to the Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee.

New Hampshire – [HB 230](#) would direct the Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food to employ an electronic data processing system for all registrations under its purview. It appears this would result in an expansion to the state pet vendor license database that is out for bid. It was voted ought to pass by the Executive Departments and Administration Committee and was held in the Finance Committee.

New Hampshire – [HB 141](#) would authorize dogs off leash on certain hiking trails and state parks so long as the owner has leash and dog in voice or physical control at all times. The Resources, Recreation and Development Committee held a public hearing on January 18. It was voted inexpedient to legislate on March 14.

New Hampshire – [HB 249](#) would establish regulatory standards for the pet insurance industry. It has been referred to the House Committee on Commerce and Consumer Affairs and a public hearing occurred on January 31. On February 28, the committee held a hearing on [an amendment](#) to allow restaurant owners to keep their dog on the premises. The bill was then voted favorably and passed the House chamber on March 22. AKC is monitoring the bill.

Rhode Island – [HB 5918](#) is a refiled measure that would create an ownership procedure for pets in divorce and separation proceedings based on the best interests of the animal. This act would not apply to assistance/service animals. AKC worked with the bill sponsor to substitute "ownership" for the word "custody" and submitted House Judiciary Committee testimony consistent with that request for the March 22 public hearing.

Rhode Island – [HB 5864](#) would define and prohibit “captive hunting” for domestic or wild animals in enclosed areas. AKC is working with the bill proponent to clarify the text and ensure no negative consequences for legal field trial activities. Testimony seeking an amendment has been submitted for the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources for a March 9 public hearing.

Rhode Island – [HB 5114](#) would permit the family court to award custody of household pets to the plaintiff in a domestic abuse complaint, including the enforcement remedy of a restraining order or other injunctive relief. AKC expressed concerns about using the legal term “custody”, given the three types of child custody at the February 14 hearing. It is being held for study.

Rhode Island – [HB 5207](#) is a re-filed bill that would establish an animal abuser registry and require pet sellers to check the registry before transferring an animal to avoid fines. Everyone can agree that animals deserve a life in a safe, caring, and healthy environment. However, registries can be easily evaded and no evidence suggests they are effective at reducing the rate of subsequent offenses. AKC believes a better use of the State’s resources would be to focus on and utilize enforcement activities that are proven effective and provided this testimony on February 14 before the House Judiciary Committee with other stakeholders. The bill is being studied.

Rhode Island – Elimination of the sales tax for taxi and pet services, such as grooming and boarding, would occur if [SB 83](#) were enacted. AKC supports the bill.

Vermont – [Act 147 Report, Section 38](#) was filed by the Vermont Department of Public Safety with the House Government Operations, as required by passage of H. 729 last session. The report outlines a plan, and draft legislation, to unify domestic animal welfare and related public safety functions across state government. AKC and the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs are currently discussing the report details and next steps with the Vermont Traditions Coalition. The Senate Agriculture Committee heard from members of the Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board regarding the report on March 3 and is requesting the state veterinarian appear before the committee the week of March 27.

Vermont – [HB 234](#) was introduced on February 14 to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs. It seeks to create an animal control program that would establish regional offices to: support municipalities with control programs and services primarily directed at domestic pets; provide free or low-cost

vaccination, spay, and neuter programs; and investigate potential locations, resources, and personnel to establish regional pound and shelter facilities.

Vermont – [HB 407](#) was introduced on February 28 and sent to House Committee on Judiciary. It is a re-file that would allow courts the discretion to place restrictions on people convicted of animal cruelty offenses regarding their future ownership interest in animals.

Vermont – [HB 410](#) would require veterinarians and domestic pet owners to send copies of the current rabies vaccine certificate for animal licensure to the municipal clerk. It was introduced on February 28 and sent to the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

Vermont – [HB 57](#) is a re-filed measure that was introduced to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs on January 27. The bill would require a dog trainer to inform a client of the methods and equipment that would be used to train a client's dog and of the risks and benefits of those methods and equipment before obtaining the client's consent to move forward. AKC is monitoring the bill closely.