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Re: Bill #284 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF PETS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

I am here to testify in support of this important victim's bill. This bill will help victims of domestic violence escape the emotional control their batterers use to extort silence, cooperation, and submission. Research shows:

- ❖ **Batterers use animals to emotionally coerce their victims into submission through threats and acts of violence against the animal.**
- ❖ **Almost three of every four battered women report that their animals are beaten, killed or threatened by the abuser - and this is most often done in the in front of women and children to intimidate, coerce, and control them.** Batterers use the animals to as a tool extort silence and compliance from their victims. We need to take this tool away from abusers to help protect our victims of violence.
- ❖ **Batterers torture, maim, and kill children's pets to manipulate the children into submission for sexual abuse and to extort the child's silence about the abuse.**
- ❖ **Domestic violence victims are unable to simply leave the abusive situations because of their fears for their animals.** While there are shelters for human victims of violence, the domestic violence victims are not permitted to bring their animals. Some domestic violence shelters have arranged for temporary safe placements of animals but this is generally limited to dogs and cats. This bill will allow the victims to stay in their homes with their animals and permit the police to arrest abusers who have contact with the animal in any other locations. This is important for victims who must go outside their house to care for the animals, such as horse owners, or who have house pets that they must leave at the veterinarian's office.
- ❖ **By including animals in temporary restraining orders (issued in civil courts) and protective orders (issued through the criminal court), the abuser can be ordered to have no contact with the animal, which will help protect the victim from contact with the abuser.** An order of no contact will forbid the abuser from selling, concealing, destroying, harming or stalking the children's and victim's animals. By keeping the abuser away from animals, the abuser has one less tool to use to use as a weapon to control and manipulate the victim.
- ❖ **This bill supports victims and public health and safety at no cost to the state.** This bill mirrors domestic violence victims bills passed in Maine, New York, and Vermont. And as we learned during Hurricane Katrina, people will not leave their animals and will choose to risk their own lives when they are not able to take their animals with them to shelters. There is now a federal law mandating that animals be considered in all state's evacuation plans, don't our domestic violence victims seeking safety from abuse deserve the same?

Thank you for your time and support of this law to protect the victims of violence in our state.

Humane Society of the United States: Animal Cruelty/Domestic Violence Fact Sheet

Why do batterers threaten, abuse, or kill animals?

- To demonstrate and confirm power and control over the family.
- To isolate the victim and children.
- To eliminate competition for attention.
- To force the family to keep violence a secret.
- To teach submission.
- To retaliate for acts of independence and self-determination.
- To perpetuate the context of terror.
- To prevent the victim from leaving or coerce her/him to return.
- To punish the victim for leaving.
- To degrade the victim through involvement in the abuse.

Why should we recognize animal abuse as a form of battering?

- Animal abuse exposes the deliberateness of battering rather than loss of control.
- Animal abuse and child abuse are closely related.
- Animal abuse is often a tool used by batterers to emotionally control or coerce victims.
- Threatening, injuring, or killing animals can indicate the potential for increased violence or lethality.
- Victims may postpone leaving out of fear for their pets' safety.
- Identifying animal abusers can help identify other victims of violence within the family.