

**Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing, March 5, 2007**

**STATEMENT OF REP. JOHN W. HETHERINGTON (125th)
IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 284**

To: Distinguished Chairmen and Committee Members:

Committee Bill 284 reflects a growing awareness of the impact pets have upon the welfare and behavior of humans. The experience of Hurricane Katrina demonstrated that storm victims would refuse evacuation and put their lives at immediate risk rather than leave behind a beloved animal. Those people in refugee centers were reported to have had greater difficulty coping and recovering due to the loss of a canine companion.

It is realistic to recognize that a victim of domestic violence can be subject to intimidation and cruelty if a pet becomes a target. The abuser can reach and hurt the victim by harming or threatening to harm a pet that is cherished by the victim. Protecting a pet forecloses an opportunity to continue to abuse a victim without technically violating an order of protection that covers only the person of the victim. The state of Maine gave similar recognition to this reality in the last few years by enacting a statute to the same effect as S.B. 284.

The bill before you adopts a very reasonable approach in that a judge is given discretion as to whether and to what extent protection is needed.

Favorable action is respectfully urged on S.B. 284.