



THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS®

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In Support of HB 6690 – An Act Concerning Court Proceedings and the Protection of Animals

Joint Judiciary Committee - April 5, 2013

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and fellow Judiciary Committee members, I would like to express the ASPCA’s full support of HB 6690 on behalf of our 22,000 Connecticut supporters.

Extraordinarily, according to the Office of Legislative Research (“Animal Cruelty Cases in Connecticut 2002-12,” Kristen L. Miller, Legislative Analyst II, 2/20/13, 2013-R-0148), **over the last ten years, 80-90% of animal cruelty cases (including misdemeanor and felony-level animal cruelty and animal fighting) have gone unprosecuted** - the cases either nolle, or dismissed by the court:

Table 1: Procedural Outcome of Animal Cruelty Offenses, 2002 - 2012

Finding	Total for Period	YEAR										
		2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Bond Forfeiture	5	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dismissed	1210	255	108	62	33	140	146	107	100	83	89	87
Guilty	594	57	37	32	38	70	54	38	66	48	65	89
Not Guilty	7	3	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0
Nolle	1883	111	201	249	130	212	138	217	136	125	167	197
Total	3699	428	348	344	201	422	339	365	302	256	321	373

This should be an unacceptable rate of enforcement. HB 6690 would help rectify this circumstance by allowing for the presence of an individual in criminal court proceedings whose sole role is to advocate for and help obtain a just outcome for the animal victim.

If justice for the animal victim is by itself not perceived to be a sufficient basis for HB 6690, concern for public safety should be. There is a well-researched and clear connection between cruelty toward animals and other forms of anti-social behavior, particularly violence toward other people. In fact, animal abusers have been found to be 5 times more likely to commit violent crimes, 4 times more likely to commit property crimes, and more than 3 times more likely to be arrested for drug and disorderly persons offenses (Luke et al, 1997). Sociologists have dubbed this correlation between animal cruelty and criminal behavior, “The Link.”

I have just learned that it has been proposed that the current pet trust law could obviate the need for HB 6690. However, the proponent has also noted that the mechanism by which a pet trust would be created - and a trustee appointed - in the context of an animal cruelty case where an owner is the abuser would necessarily require authorities to forego imposition of the fines and imprisonment outlined in the cruelty law. This is not an appropriate resolution to these cases.

Again, the ASPCA wholly supports HB 6690 and respectfully but strongly urges a favorable report by the Judiciary Committee.