

Support of HB 5566

Dear Representative Urban, Senator Bartolmeo, and Honorable Members of the Children Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 5566, which would restrict the placement of leghold traps.

I am a registered voter in Greenwich, Connecticut and this bill is important to me. A few weeks ago, I was out walking in the woods with my dogs and one of them got caught in a leghold trap. It was such a horrendous experience for me and my dog, that I came home and wrote a letter to our local paper explaining what we had been through that day. They printed the letter, and there has been so much talk about the subject since it was published. I am including the letter along with this testimony.

I feel that trapping in general, is barbaric and inhumane. I feel they have no place near schools certainly, but have no place in a civilized town, such as Greenwich , where pets have a chance of being caught in them. We live in a town where pets are almost in every household. It seems that the few sightings of coyotes certainly do not justify, the laying out of so many traps that I have had two different dogs step in them, at two different locations, at two different times. The State of Connecticut needs to examine this barbaric practice. The fact that a bill limiting where these traps can be set as far as proximity to schools, has not been passed before now, seems incredible to me. If my dog had been a child, God forbid, this issue would be long gone by now. Please do not wait until a child is the next victim, to pass on this bill.

Thank you for your considerations.

Yours truly,
Betsy Underhill
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A Walk in the Woods

We all live in very stressful times. People are angry, depressed, and opinionated beyond reasoning, short tempered, and full of rage. Whether driving, watching sporting events, at work, finding parking places, waiting in line at the grocery-----the list goes on and on it doesn't seem to matter what venue anymore. People are just full of anger. I think it is for this reason that I cherish my daily walks with my dogs, because it is at this time that the anger and frustration around me can disappear and become an hour of enjoying nature, and all the peacefulness that it can bring. It has become a ritual that I do not really like to miss. My dogs are happy, and so am I. I try to pick different places to go each day, so my dogs have different smells, and a different environment each time. The woods are our favorites, but we only venture in there with consideration to the limitations. Those include: tick season, extreme muddy conditions, and extreme rain ect. Last Saturday, with the temperature in the lows 20's, and a slight glaze of snow on the ground, the conditions were perfect. I ventured out across the street from our house into beautiful woods with a pond and trails. The day was sunny, and for most of the walk it was pure heaven. Then, all of a sudden, out of the blue, I heard my 80 lb standard poodle screeching in pain and helplessness. I looked ahead and thought an animal had caught him by the nose, because his head was down and he was not leaving his spot as he howled in pain. My heart sank, wondering how I was going to combat what ever he was struggling with. As I got closer to him, I realized it was not another animal, but instead it was a huge coyote trap that had clamped down on his leg and paw. He was biting at everything----including me as I approached. He was confused, in a panic and in defend mode. I kneeled down to try

and force the trap open, but it would not budge. There were houses nearby and I prayed someone would come out to help, hearing his howling and yelling, but no one appeared. I went into adrenaline mode, knowing it was only my effort or my dog stayed trapped. I knew I would never leave him to go get help. He could have chewed his leg off by then, he was so panicked. I saw something on the side of the trap and pushed down hard, and noticed that one side slightly opened. There were, however, two of these springs on either side, and I doubted I had the strength to open both at once, as well as controlling my dog that was biting at my hand to get the thing off. The only thing I can say, is the strength came from somewhere, because I got him out. He was holding his leg up not putting any weight on it so I sat down in the snow and just held him in my lap. At that point, I had a thirty-minute walk back, and I had no idea how I would get him back. He was too big to carry, and I thought his leg was broken. Meanwhile, I was also trying to calm down my other 25 lb dog, who was beside herself in fear.

I am writing this because I feel as a person who has lived in this town for thirty years, we need to all step back and examine what we need to do to make sure our town is a pleasant, and safe place for all people with all different needs and wants. There is so much controversy about guns right now, and how best to protect ourselves and our children from the devastation they can cause in the wrong hands. There is no easy answer on how to do this, and I am not about to enter the discussion. My concern, after last weekend, is how best to enjoy nature, and all it has to offer, if I have to worry about hunters, and trappers. This is not the first time one of our dogs has stepped in a trap. Two years ago, in totally different woods, our small 25 lb miniature poodle stepped on one, which I wasn't there for, but my husband was. He was much more knowledgeable about traps and picked her up, and removed it. When I heard him relate the

story to me when he got back, I just kept being so thankful it wasn't me that had to deal, because I didn't think I could. We have two dogs and both have stepped in traps in this town. I find something wrong with that---am I crazy?

In the fall we have bow hunters---there are always both sides expressing their opinion about that subject, but at least in hunting season, they seem to post when they are hunting and the trails are closed. I can deal with that, but you homeowners who hire hunters to trap, or shoot with no restrictions or regard for the town and where they are doing this, need to ask yourself: "what if it were your dog or child who stepped on one of their traps?" You most likely have concerns about the coyotes that have come to Greenwich. I have seen them myself right outside our back river. Instead of trying to kill them, we just make sure we never let our small dog out unattended-----ever!!!! My neighbor once asked if she could post a bow hunter in one of our trees so after they lure the deer over to her property with food, he would shoot them. Did I turn her down? You're darn right I did. She had beautiful gardens she wanted protected, and that was her motivation. Every fall my husband takes great precautions to wrap the bushes he does not want eaten by deer, and that does the trick. Every summer every inch of our beautiful hosta and impatiens are stripped to the root by deer, but hey, if I don't want wild life in my backyard, than I should move to the city. The other day we had six deer in our yard. What beautiful creatures they are. I cannot imagine shooting one, but I stay out of the debate on how much it is needed to thin them out. I just know I enjoy looking at them , no matter how much they eat out of our yard. I will adjust.

We must all learn to live more in harmony with each other, and with the wonderful wildlife that is part of our enviroment. Stop thinking this town is yours and yours alone. You must learn to share space and ideas about the space we share. Have some

compassion for others, and for other opinions besides your own. I think the reason people are so angry and unhappy, is because we have become a "me" orientated society. There is no accountability for anything. God forbid our gardens should be eaten by creatures trespassing on private property! Don't they read the signs? This mentality has got to change or the anger will never subside. Cherish animals-----protect your own and the wild ones trying to survive in cold winters. Bring back compassion, and you will bring back a much more peaceful state of mind, and then, believe it or not, you may actually wake up one morning with less anger, and find that "happy" is back in your vocabulary

Thank you for listening

Betsy Underhill

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