

Testimony in SUPPORT OF H.B. 6187 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS THAT ARE THE SUBJECT OF CRIMINAL COURT PROCEEDINGS. ("Desmond's Law"): Hearing 4/1/15

Submitted by Rosamund Downing,
District Leader (2nd Congressional District, CT), Humane Society of the United States
39 Moss St.
Pawcatuck, CT. 06379
860-599-5220

Dear Co-chair Coleman, Co-chair Tong and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Connecticut needs to enact legislation that would allow courts to appoint a volunteer to investigate and advocate for an animal that is the subject of a civil or criminal court proceeding. As we defend children through the use of guardians *Ad Litem*, it is only logical that our state should similarly protect its other voiceless members – animals.

Make no mistake, animal abuse IS a public safety issue. It must be taken seriously. Studies have repeatedly shown that there is a strong link between human welfare and animal welfare. Animal abuse has been clearly linked to violent crime, property crime, as well as disorderly conduct (Arluke & Luke, 1997). HB 6187 would help identify animal abusers – which would result in earlier treatment and/or incarceration of dangerous individuals. When animals are protected by our judicial system and animal abuse is brought out into the open, all of us will benefit from a safer community.

As a high school teacher, I am especially concerned about violent youth. Cruelty to animals is one of the early indicators of future violent behavior towards humans. Swift justice for animals would facilitate proper psychiatric treatment for children – when such treatment is most likely to be effective (aggressive children are less responsive to treatment as they age – Kazdin, 1995; Loeber, 1990). More than half of the school shooters in the late 1990s were known to have abused animals (Miner, 1999). Additionally, serial killers, like Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer, usually have histories of animal abuse.

Pet abuse is also one of the predictors of violence against domestic partners (Walton-Moss, Manganello, Frye & Campbell, 2005) and it is often an indicator of trouble in the home. Abuse or neglect of an animal may likely reflect abuse/neglect of children and elders in that home. Surveys have shown that 85% of shelters have reported that women seeking “safe house” protection spoke of incidents of pet abuse (Ascione, Weber, & Wood 1997). Pet abuse (or

threats thereof) are used by abusers to terrorize family members - women will sometimes stay in dangerous situations because they fear leaving the pet behind. CT already recognizes the need to include pets in domestic violence protection orders, and our state also has cross-reporting laws.

A safe society is one in which ALL of its members are assured protection. In order to achieve this, animals need their day in court! Please support HB 6187.

Thank you.