

**Testimony Concerning 5344**  
**Judiciary Committee February 24,2016**  
**Diane Leja**

I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of 5344, Desmond's Law.

I am very concerned that those that abuse animals and do not face steep consequences or jail time may go on to abuse animals and people with added vengeance. I am particularly interested in prosecuting all those that find dog fighting and other animal fighting activities a normal activity. There have been reports that dogs are being stolen for usage as bait dogs. These people expose their children to these acts and now a new generation may feel it is sport to hurt innocent animals. In addition, I am concerned that abuse of animals is going unnoticed and innocent animals are found dead through circumstances out of their control. For example, a dog-named Bella was stolen from her home, shot execution style, and her body dumped over 30 miles away in a Connecticut state park. Just this week, another dog was found dead in a zippered luggage bag. The dog was emancipated, and according to reports, tried to get out of the luggage by all means. No animal deserves to die in the hands of an abuser. What if the two dogs I mentioned were killed by someone who was an abuser but no penalty was every handed down. Those two dogs and their families would still be happy and loving each other. Instead, they are left with questions about why someone would do these atrocious acts to their loved pets.

When I was in elementary school, I had a fabulous street smart dog named Ralph. When my mom would visit neighbors, Ralph would go looking for her. He used to meet me half way when I walked home from school. One day, Ralph crawled home and was crying. We didn't know what was wrong with him but knew that it was serious. My oldest brother and father drove Ralph to the emergency vet. After x-rays, it was determined that he had a couple of broken ribs. The vet assumed someone had hit him with an object or possibly kicked him. As a child, who was taught to love all living things, I couldn't be consoled that someone hurt my Ralph. That happened over 35 years ago, but I still feel those raw feelings of that day. Ralph came home after a couple of days and as a family we decided that someone bad lived near us, so Ralph couldn't roam anymore. Maybe that person, continued to hurt animals and was never stopped.

My concern is that abusers can change many lives through their actions. If they have children who are exposed to these acts, it may persuade them to become abusers too. We need to help not only innocent animals, but also those affected by the abuser's actions. Let's pass this law and send a message to all who like to hurt innocent voiceless creatures, that their actions will have consequences.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,  
Diane Leja, New Britain