



ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION
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May 20, 2013

Consolidated Animal Crimes Legislation Gains Support From The Ulster County Legislature

Sadly, crimes against animals occur anywhere in a community and the correlation between people who commit crimes against animals that eventually commit crimes on people is staggering. Yet, New York's animal cruelty laws have been hidden within the State's Agriculture Law and Markets statutes leaving enforcement and the justice system in catch up mode when crimes occur.

"It's an obscure place to put them," Brian Shapiro, the State Director of Humane Society of the United States, New York State and former Ulster County Legislator said. "Law enforcement and judges are not familiar with agriculture law ... that's not a place for serious legal practice."

The Consolidate Animal Crimes Bills (A775a/S1776) currently before the New York State Legislature will improve law enforcement of animal cruelty by including it under the penal code. This change promotes sound enforcement and consistent interpretation of animal crimes and matters such as search warrants, fingerprinting, collection of DNA, recordkeeping, court surcharges, and other procedural aspects of law enforcement become applicable.

"The law concerning abuse of animals needs to be within the penal system," stated Towns of Hurley and Woodstock Legislator Donald Gregorius. "We want to make sure that those who abuse animals are given a fair hearing and if found guilty appropriate penalties will apply. It is important that a consistent and effective deterrence reduce and, to the extent possible, eliminate animal cruelty. The current system does not insure that will happen."

Legislator Carl Belfiglio, representing the Town of Esopus, stated, "With the passage of the Consolidated Animal Crimes Bills, there will be a vehicle for Police Departments to effectively and swiftly apply criminal charges when and where abuse occurs."

"It is time to take a holistic approach to crime. Animal crimes are not isolated events. Individuals involved in animal abuse present a real danger to the community as a whole. With the passage of this legislation, we will finally be putting the tools in the hands of law enforcement and the justice system to ensure the public's safety from animal abusers," stated Majority Leader and Town of Shawangunk Legislator Kenneth Ronk, the originating sponsor of the Ulster County resolution, following its unanimous passage at the Ulster County Legislature's May Meeting.

The resolution was co-sponsored by Legislators Belfiglio and Gregorius as well as Legislative Chairman and Towns of Wawarsing and Rochester Legislator Terry Bernardo, Town of Saugerties Legislator Mary Wawro, Towns of Marbletown and Rosendale Legislator Robert Parete and Towns of Esopus and New Paltz Legislator Kenneth Wishnick. The Resolution urges the New York State Governor and Legislature to ensure the passage of A755a/S1776 within the 2013-2014 New York State Legislative session.

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