

Texas Legislators Vie for New Bill to Limit Pet Ownership Rights

DALLAS, Texas, April 13 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – A collective group of animal organizations – Animal Owners Association of Texas, Professional Canine Breeder Association, East Texas Dog Lovers and individuals – have come together to stand against a bill that they say is unconscionable.

“While thousands of teachers, police and firemen are losing jobs, Texas lawmakers are proposing the passage of HB 1451 designed to implement a costly kennel inspection program,” says Linda Rogers of Animal Owners Association of Texas. “It’s unconscionable for lawmakers to even consider trading scarce funds for human needs and services to implement costly kennel inspections.”

According to this collective, HB 1451 imposes numerous regulations that would not improve the health and welfare of dogs, but would unconstitutionally violate the rights of responsible breeders at great expense to Texas taxpayers. If passed, the bill is slated to increase state spending by 1.3 million per year. Even though the bill indicates cost will be absorbed by breeder fees, details are unclear regarding start-up fees and more.

“There’s already a penal code that addresses the humane care and treatment of all animals without regard to quantity or use,” explains Rogers. “It’s Texas Penal Code 42.092.”

Included among the many associations and individuals against this bill are: the Sheriff’s Association of Texas; Animal Owners Association of Texas; Professional Canine Breeders Association; East Texas Dog Lovers; American Kennel Club; American Pet Registry Inc.; Endangered Breeds Association; American Dog Breeders Ass.; Responsible Pet Owners Alliance; Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council; Texas Pet Industry Coalition; Canine Animal Rescue Effort; American Canine Association; and a host of individual pet lovers, kennel clubs, and Texas veterinarians.

“I’m concerned over the possible passage of HB 1451,” says Dwayne Collins DVM, who has been practicing veterinarian medicine for 42 years. “This bill has many similarities to the bill that was passed in Missouri, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma and clearly had adverse effects on reputable kennel operations. For instance, Oklahoma went from more than 700 licensed USDA kennels to a little more than 350 after the bill’s passage. No major breed registries, including the American Kennel Club support the Texas bill.”

Collins adds that this bill needs to be tabled and rewritten to include those who will be most impacted (i.e., major breed registries, kennel operators and mom and pop operations).

According to bill supporters, the bill will only impact commercial breeders who possess 11 or more adult intact female dogs or cats who are engaged in the business of breeding those animals and selling their offspring. Small breeders with 10 or fewer female breeding dogs will not be affected by the

bill, nor will pet stores or other retail outlets that sell dogs or cats.

However, bill opponents say that anyone who breeds/owns dogs or cats will be impacted financially and emotionally with over burdensome rules, regulations, and fees that will be constituted by a commission that has no understanding of the industry.

Additionally, the bill has a provision that allows the department to solicit and accept gifts, grants and other donations from any source, leaving the door open for animal rights activists to influence and control the department.

In the words of Rep. Senfronia Thompson of District 141, "I do not own a pet; I have never bought a bag of dog food and I never will."

Thompson is the author HB 1451 and wants people to believe that she is doing this for the care and treatment of animals.

Rep. Patricia Harless of District 126 also supports the bill. However, her support is in direct opposition to issues posted on her website. By supporting the bill, private property rights will be limited because animals are private property and free market principles will be discouraged by arbitrarily closing thousands of small businesses that are already doing things right.

Currently, responsible breeders are regulated through USDA, AKC and/or their veterinarians. Irresponsible breeders/owners are not regulated and will avoid any and all laws. If the animals are not cared for, then sheriff or police departments have the right to proceed with Texas Penal Code 42.092.

There were nine committee members: Chairman Rep. Mike Hamilton, Rep. Chente Quintanilla, Rep. Joe Driver, Rep. Charlie Geren, Rep. Roland Gutierrez, Rep. Patricia Harless, Rep. John Kuempel, Rep. Jose Menendez and Rep. Senfronia Thompson. Six of them voted yes to send HB 1451 for a house vote. Three representatives were absent.

To learn more about the bill, visit: www.legis.state.tx.us and search for HB 1451.

To contact legislators and senators, visit: <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/>
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