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Senate of Pennsylvania

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APR 03 2012

TO: All Senators

FROM: Senator Richard Alloway II *Rich*

SUBJECT: **Co-sponsorship Memo – Shelter Legislation**

DATE: April 2, 2012

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation which will amend Title 18 to enhance local government and private establishments' ability to care for abused animals. The current anticruelty law, Pennsylvania Crimes Code Section 5511, addresses animal cruelty, but provides local jurisdictions with no ability to reduce the costs of caring for animals while criminal cases move through the legal system.

As the incidence of large-scale animal cruelty cases rises and fiscal budgets continue to shrink, this legislation will provide a means to serve the public's dual desires to stop animal cruelty and conserve governmental resources. It also ensures that quality care for rescued and abused animals will be placed in the hands of experts who are experienced in dealing with similar situations.

Thousands of animals are seized by Pennsylvania law enforcement officers every year because of reports of animal cruelty. Pennsylvania state and local agencies and shelters tasked with caring for these animals during the pendency of criminal cases are often without adequate resources and thus overwhelmed. Smaller municipalities may simply choose not to prosecute these cases because of the large and sometimes insurmountable financial burden of caring for the large numbers of abused, sick, and suffering animals. As you may have read in Harrisburg newspapers, the city has difficulty paying its contracted arrangement with the local Humane Society. Thus, a memo was issued to local police about how to handle stray animals which included not bringing them to the shelter. Police were instructed to kill, adopt, or dump strays. This underscores the difficulty that shelters are having in paying for the care of animals; be the shelters private or municipal.

With this new legislation, Pennsylvania would join close to 25 other states in providing a legal means for funding the care or expediting the release of animals held during the pendency of cruelty cases. The new bill presents a solution to the problems described above, providing at least four important benefits: it shifts the financial burden of animal cruelty from municipalities and nonprofit shelters to those responsible for the animal's suffering, it supports the enforcement of the animal cruelty laws, it expedites the release of animals' from long-term confinement to permanent homes in a expedited fashion in many cases, it encourages regional shelters and national groups to increase their assistance and support in Pennsylvania large scale cruelty cases.

It is also important to identify that this is not another "dog law" bill. This legislation will apply to all animals in abusive environments, be they hoarding or other unfortunate circumstances.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, please contact Melissa Knepper at mknepper@pasen.gov or by phone at 772-2929.