

AKC letter to the Editor Regarding North Carolina SB 460

Dear Editor,

There are two issues on which every dog lover agrees. First, dogs deserve a life in a safe, caring, and healthy environment. Second, those who treat dogs in a negligent or cruel manner should be held accountable.

At the capitol today, Sen. Don Davis held a press conference to discuss Senate Bill 460 - the so-called puppy mill bill - that stalled in the House Finance Committee last year. Davis introduced this bill last spring after a large, substandard kennel in his Wayne County district was raided and closed down. Thanks to North Carolina's effective negligence and cruelty laws, the kennel owner has since been convicted on cruelty charges.

During the press conference, Davis cited a problem common among animal control departments throughout the country: Departments regularly lack the tools needed to go after illegal substandard kennels. The biggest concern we hear from animal control services is a lack of funding – for personnel, training and even carrying out their basic mission.

SB 460 attempts to solve this problem by creating a system that requires anyone in North Carolina with 15 intact female dogs and 30 puppies (the bill doesn't say if the numbers are cumulative or at the same time), to register with the state. The bill then authorizes the state to require counties to investigate any animal care complaints received by the state—but it provides no funding. So beyond establishing another layer of bureaucracy, what does it actually accomplish?

The animals that need help will still need it – and our cash-strapped counties will be stretched even further. And unless every county in the state raises taxes significantly, the problem is back full circle: County animal services still don't have the resources they need to carry out existing laws.

There's no doubt most of us love our dogs and abhor animal cruelty. However, when it comes to legislating this issues, reasonable people must ensure that a new law actually does what it's supposed to do: protect the health and welfare of dogs and without infringing on the rights of responsible, law abiding citizens. Senate Bill 460 failed that test.

We have good laws on the books. What we need now is good enforcement. Let's devote our limited resources to enforcing existing laws that punish neglect and cruelty, rather than wasting them on confusing and expensive new laws that can't be enforced.

As the world's largest not-for-profit dog registry, the American Kennel club is dedicated to advancing canine health and wellbeing, educating the public about responsible dog

ownership, and protecting the rights of all responsible dog owners. We are also the only registry that has a significant breeder inspections program. AKC spends over \$6 million a year to ensure that breeders who register with us are inspected.

Sincerely,

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