



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

Strengthen Animal Cruelty Laws to Protect Pets and People

[James Tedisco](#)

March 31, 2025

ISSUE:

- [animal cruelty](#)
- [COMPANION ANIMALS](#)
- [bail law; criminal justice; discovery; law enforcement; crime victims](#)
- [Judicial Discretion](#)



by Senator Jim Tedisco

Companion animals such as dogs and cats do so much to comfort us when we need them.

Pets offer companionship in more than 86 million U.S. households, and studies have shown they can provide a variety of health benefits including reducing stress and anxiety.

Our animals give emotional support and assistance to seniors and people with disabilities. They even have trained dogs that can tell if someone with diabetes needs their insulin medicine. And they help police, fire departments, and search and rescue efforts to keep our citizens safe.

We remember that canines were a critical part of the U.S. Navy Seal Team 6 mission to take down and eliminate Osama Bin Laden.

Unfortunately, there are some individuals who do not see the value of such life resulting in animal abuse, cruelty and neglect, which occur far too often, leading to unnecessary pain and suffering to animals.

As research indicates, violence against animals is a bridge crime that can, and has, led to violence against people.

A clear example of that is the individual who poured kerosene on Buster the cat in Schenectady that inspired passage of **Buster's Law** in 1999. This individual later was imprisoned for various crimes, including attempted rape, sexual abuse and unlawful imprisonment of a 12-year-old girl.

I was proud to be the driving force behind passage of the landmark Buster's Law creating the felony category of "aggravated cruelty to animals," punishable by up to two years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

The FBI has animal cruelty as a top tier Group A offense in its crime reporting statistics due to it being a bridge crime.

While we've made positive steps since the passage of Buster's Law, there's still miles to go. That's why I'm urging passage of several public safety bills to protect people and pets from harm.

[On March 21st, Christopher Maxwell from the Bronx and Latisha Ellis of Albany](#) were charged with allegedly torturing and setting a pit bull puppy on fire in a crate in the parking lot of Elijah Missionary Church in Albany.

The pair were arrested and charged under "**Buster's Law**" with felony aggravated cruelty to animals and released with an appearance ticket because animal cruelty is no longer a bailable offense under the bail reform law passed and supported by the Governor and Legislative Majorities in the state legislature.

The shocking and extremely disturbing torture and murder of a puppy who was allegedly set ablaze in Albany by these depraved individuals not only highlights the need to strengthen our state's animal cruelty laws but also is yet another example of New York's broken so-called "criminal justice reform" laws and the failed bail law that's created a revolving door of danger and disaster.

Anyone who would be so dastardly as to starve and light a defenseless puppy on fire like this would have no hesitation to harm a human and is a clear and present danger to public safety and should not automatically be given an appearance ticket and allowed to walk free.

I'm sponsoring [bi-partisan legislation to repeal the failed bail law \(S.4461\)](#) and give judges reasonable discretion as 49 other states do.

There's often a direct correlation between domestic violence and animal cruelty where abusers will harm or threaten to harm a partner's cat or dog.

A [2017 study by the National Sheriff's Association](#) found that 89 percent of women who had companion animals during an abusive relationship reported that their animals were threatened, harmed or killed by their abusive partner.

I'm sponsoring a bill to increase the criminal penalty from two years in jail to four years in prison under the crime of [aggravated cruelty to animals in a domestic violence incident \(S.6880\)](#).

In addition, I'm sponsoring legislation to increase penalties for violating "**Buster's Law**" from the [current two years in jail and a \\$5,000 fine to four years in prison and a \\$10,000 fine \(S.1205\)](#) and requiring those [convicted of animal cruelty from owning or possessing a companion animal and ensure abusers receive a psychiatric evaluation \(S.1044\)](#).

[I'm also sponsoring "Kirby & Quigley's Law"](#) making it an additional felony with 2 years in jail and a \$5,000 fine for harming a companion animal in the commission of another crime such as burglary (S.470).

These measures aren't just about protecting our pets, they're about keeping all members of our family safe from violence.

Any person who would light a dog in a crate on fire would likely not hesitate to harm a human.

We have an obligation as a government to protect all members of our family, including those who have no voice.

Having a companion animal is not a right, it's a privilege, but our pets and people have a right to be safe from abuse and neglect.

The scales of justice are now tipped in favor of criminals as crime victims and our beloved companion animals have become the forgotten New Yorkers.

related legislation

[**2025-S4461**](#)

-
- Introduced
 - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
 - Delivered to Governor
 - Signed By Governor

• [Repeals certain provisions of the criminal procedure law, judiciary law and the executive law and makes conforming changes thereto; repealer](#)

February 05, 2025

In Senate Committee [Codes](#)

Sponsored by [James Tedisco](#)

Do you support this bill?

[2025-S6880](#)

-
- Introduced
 - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
 - Delivered to Governor
 - Signed By Governor

• [Relates to aggravated cruelty to animals during an incident of domestic violence](#)

March 25, 2025

In Senate Committee [Agriculture](#)

Sponsored by [James Tedisco](#)

Do you support this bill?

2025-S1205

-
- Introduced
 - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
 - Delivered to Governor
 - Signed By Governor
 -

[Increases certain penalties for violating the prohibition of animal fighting and for aggravated cruelty to animals](#)

January 08, 2025

In Senate Committee [Agriculture](#)

Sponsored by [James Tedisco](#)

Do you support this bill?

2025-S1044

- Introduced
 - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor

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[Prohibits a person convicted of violating "Buster's Law" from owning or possessing a companion animal](#)

January 07, 2025

In Senate Committee [Agriculture](#)

Sponsored by [James Tedisco](#)

Do you support this bill?

[2025-S470](#)

-
- Introduced
 - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
 - Delivered to Governor
 - Signed By Governor

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[Expands the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony](#)

December 31, 2024

In Senate Committee [Agriculture](#)

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Do you support this bill?