



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Give a Pet a New “Leash on Life”

PATTY RITCHIE January 13, 2014

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### Senator Ritchie’s Weekly Column

I’ve always been a dog person and today, couldn’t imagine life without my lovable yellow lab “Gunner.” That’s why I’m pleased to report that just recently, a measure I cosponsored to allow municipalities to regulate pet dealers was signed into law. The new law will give local governments the authority to enact stronger measures to protect the well-being of animals and will help to crack down on puppy mills—inhumane commercial dog-breeding facilities that may sell animals in pet stores, online or directly to the public.

Not only am I working to prevent animal abuse, I’m also working to spotlight the hundreds of pets across Central and Northern New York who are looking to be adopted into caring homes.

That’s why I’m teaming up with the local animal shelters to feature “Pets of the Week,” on my website and on my Facebook page. There, you’ll also find contact information for local shelters that are home to hundreds of other animals looking for loving caregivers.

According to recent statistics, an estimated 2.7 million healthy shelter pets are not adopted each year, and only about 30 percent of pets in homes come from shelters and rescues. If you’re considering adopting, it’s important to remember that bringing a new pet into your home is a big step that comes with a lot of responsibilities. Here are several guidelines you can use to determine if you’re ready:

- Make sure you have the financial resources necessary to care for a pet—that includes being able to budget enough money to pay for veterinarian visits, food, toys, bedding collars and other necessities;

- Is your home ready for a pet? If you rent, it's important to determine whether your landlord allows pets, and if so, what types. In addition, the size of your home should also complement the type of pet you select. For example, smaller dogs, like Dachshunds, Pugs and Cocker Spaniels are well-suited for apartments and larger dogs such as Golden Retrievers and German Shepherds need more room;
- You should also determine whether you have the time in your schedule to care for a pet. Pets cannot be ignored when you are tired or busy, and require food, water, regular exercise and other types of care every day of the year;
- Is your family ready? If you have little ones under the age of six, you may want to consider waiting a few years before you adopt, as younger children typically have a more difficult time understanding the way to properly handle a pet;

When you adopt a pet, you not only open your home, you open your heart too. If you're ready to care for a pet, I encourage you help an animal in need by considering adopting from a local shelter today.