



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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A New Level of Protection for Pets

PATTY RITCHIE July 28, 2014

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

If you've ever lost a pet, you know how painful of an experience it can be. But can you imagine having your pet stolen? Sadly, pet theft is a reality for an increasing number of people. According to the American Kennel Club, there were more than 590 pets stolen in 2013. This represents a 31 percent increase over the number of thefts in the prior year. Pets are stolen for a variety of reasons, including many being sold and shipped to puppy mills to be used for breeding or if the dog is of a designer breed, such as Labradoodles or purebreds, they're often resold.

Pets are part of the family, and that's why I'm happy to report legislation I supported to strengthen penalties for theft and mistreatment of pets was recently signed into law. This new measure will increase the maximum fine—for the first time since 1970—from \$200 to \$1,000 for those who harm, steal or transport a pet that's not their own.

While this legislation represents a new level of protection for animals, it's so important to continue to take steps to keep our pets safe. Here are a few ways you can ensure your pet stays out of harm's way:

- Keep your pet on its leash;
- Don't leave your pet unattended in a vehicle—not only can it pose a health risk in the hot weather, it puts your animal in plain sight for thieves;

- Make sure your pet is properly identified by a tag or other means;
- Avoid leaving your animal unattended in your yard—if you're not home, keep them indoors; and
- If you're out running errands, never leave your pet tied up outside a store where thieves could easily untie it.

As a dog owner myself, I know how important it is to protect our pets. That's why I've supported a number of measures and initiatives to ensure our animals are kept safe and healthy, including:

- A measure that allows municipalities to regulate pet dealers, giving local governments the authority to enact stronger laws to protect the well-being of animals and crack down on puppy mills;
- Legislation that makes it a crime to possess dog fighting equipment or other devices used to train fighting dogs. The measure protects innocent animals from a growing number of animal fight cases, by giving police and prosecutors new tools to stop dog fighters; and
- From now through the fall I will be hosting a series of free rabies vaccination clinics. These build upon last year's events, where nearly 1,000 pets were protected. For a list of clinics, [please click here](#).

Pets are part of the family and in the future, I look forward to building upon these efforts by continuing to work to keep our pets healthy and protect them from harm.

