



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Weekly Column #7: Animal abuse and neglect can never be tolerated

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 4, 2016

| ISSUE: **ANIMAL RIGHTS, CRIME, ANIMAL ABANDONMENT, ANIMAL ABUSE**



For anyone who owns a pet, it can be difficult to imagine living without their companionship. Our dogs, cats and other furry friends often become an extension of our families, with all the love and responsibility such a bond brings.

That's why it is so shocking and heartbreaking every time we hear of yet another animal that has been starved, abandoned, tortured, maimed or even killed in an awful act of abuse.

It is far too easy to treat an animal as if its life doesn't matter. But if a person can treat a living creature with such cruelty and inhumanity, we can only assume what that says about the violent disregard that person may possess toward life in general.

As we celebrate National Prevention of Animal Cruelty Month in April, it's important to recognize the steps we can take to ensure that animals are provided a comfortable, healthy and safe life.

First, let me say that I am proud to have joined in the New York State Senate's efforts to strengthen the laws and penalties that already exist against acts of animal abuse and neglect. While many laws are on the books to address animal crimes, some use vague, outdated language that makes it challenging for law enforcement to consistently interpret the law.

I have co-sponsored the Senate's proposed Consolidated Animal Crimes Bill that would help police officers better understand and utilize the law to hold people accountable for animal cruelty and neglect. Many animal crime laws are currently listed under Agriculture and Markets Law, which means some officers may not be familiar with all of the offenses that could be appropriately considered animal abuse. In these instances, some officers might not have even realize the law allowed them to file charges. By transferring the most common offenses from the Agriculture and Markets Law to the Penal Law, police, prosecutors and the courts will be better equipped to deal with acts of animal crime.

I have also supported legislation passed by the Senate recently that would stiffen the penalties against people who abandon their pets with no regard for their health and safety. Pets are not to be simply discarded or left behind just because an owner no longer wants them, or can't afford to care for them anymore. When someone becomes a pet owner, they have an obligation to fulfill the responsibility they willingly accepted.

While we continue to work at improving animal crime laws, there's much we can also do to help these animals before police ever have to get involved.

If you see that an animal may be neglected, consider politely approaching the owner to make them aware of your concern. They may be struggling financially, or perhaps they are physically unable to feed, groom or care for their pet properly, and so they may appreciate some help and guidance in providing for their pet. There are a number of food pantries that offer pet food for owners in times of need.

No pet or animal should ever have to suffer, either cruelly at the hands of an abuser or just because an owner can no longer handle the responsibility. By continuing to make clear that animal cruelty and neglect will not be tolerated, we can help ensure that animals are treated with the compassion they deserve.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2015-S3201

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- 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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Relates to promoting understanding, awareness and enforcement of animal crimes laws; repealer

February 03, 2015

In Senate Committee [Agriculture](#)

Sponsored by [Andrew J. Lanza](#)

Do you support this bill?

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## 2015-S401

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- 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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Establishes a task force for the review of the state administrative procedure act

December 24, 2014

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Patrick M. Gallivan

Do you support this bill?