



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## WHEN IT COMES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, PETS NEED PROTECTION TOO

SUSAN SERINO April 25, 2017

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ALBANY, NY— According to the Urban Resource Institute, 48% of victims of domestic violence do not leave their abuser because they fear what would happen to their pet. A bill sponsored by Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) passed in the Senate today that aims to eradicate that fear by providing new protections for companion animals.

*“For many of us, our pets are an extension of our families,” said Senator Sue Serino. “Too often, even when victims of abuse recognize the need to leave their abuser, they cannot bring themselves to do so for*

*fear of what will happen to their pets. If we want to empower victims to move forward and begin rebuilding their lives, we need to remove as many barriers to help as we can. Knowing that the pets they love have an added layer of protection can encourage victims to take steps that may ultimately save their lives.”*

American Humane Association noted that 71% of pet-owning women entering women's shelters reported that their batterer had injured, maimed, killed or threatened family pets for revenge or to psychologically control their victim. Currently, orders of protection only prohibit the respondent from intentionally injuring or killing a pet belonging to the petitioner or a minor child in their household. Senator Serino's bill aims to ensure that more is being done to prevent a tragedy by giving the court discretion to forbid any contact between the abuser and any pet that is cared for by the victim.

“Knowing that an abuser has violated an order of protection would serve little comfort in the tragic event that someone lost their pet,” Serino continued. “Strengthening this law will not only better protect these pets, but also signal to victims of abuse that we are consciously working to empower them and ensure that they have the tools they need to seek help and start their lives anew.”

Senator Serino Co-Chairs the Legislature's Animal Advocacy Day, a bi-partisan event aimed at raising awareness for the need to better protect New York's companion animals. This year's event will be held on Tuesday, June 6<sup>th</sup> in Albany.