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# New York Senate Majority Passes Legislation Promoting Animal Welfare in Honor of Animal Advocacy Day

(Albany, N.Y.) Today, the Senate Democratic Majority passed legislation to further protect animal welfare and strengthen regulations around the sale and treatment of pets. Through this legislation, the Democratic Conference is making a concerted effort to continue protecting the wellbeing and dignity of those who can't advocate for themselves. This package, which coincides with Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month, builds on our successful animal cruelty prevention efforts from last year to protect racehorses and majestic animals from inhumane treatment.

This package includes provisions that would further prohibit insurance policy restrictions based on specific dog breeds to include renters insurance; prevent the participation of certain wild animals in traveling acts; restrict animal devocalization to instances of medical necessity; require the prompt inspection of abandoned properties for abandoned animals; clarify the law on aggravated cruelty towards animals; expand and strengthen exotic animals ban; and enhance penalties for animal fighting.

**Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said, "It is our duty to stand up for the voiceless and those who can't protect themselves, which includes our beloved pets and animals. I am very proud of the progress our conference has made in preventing animal cruelty and abuse, including the enactment of legislation from last year's bills package to further protect our state's racehorses. I commend the sponsors in this package for continuing to champion legislation that will enhance penalties for animal abuse and bolster protections against animal cruelty."

**Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Senator Michelle Hinchey** said, "Our pets are family—they count on us for love and care, and they shouldn't be left to suffer because their owner walked away and left them behind. I'm proud that my bill requiring vacated homes to be checked for abandoned animals within three days of a tenant moving out has passed the Senate, as part of a broader package to protect animal welfare. Animal neglect has no place in our society, and we'll continue pushing for this important bill to get over the finish line in both houses this year."

The legislation being passed by the Senate Democratic Majority includes:

- **Prohibiting the use of certain wild animals in traveling acts:** This bill, [S.3629A](#) , sponsored by Senator Nathalia Fernandez, would prohibit using certain wild animals such as big cats, monkeys, and bears in traveling circuses and other traveling animal performances, and prohibit the New York Department of Environmental Conservation from issuing permits and licenses allowing the participation of these wild animals in circuses and other traveling animal performances.
- **Prohibits insurance policy restrictions based on specific dog breeds:** This bill, [S.364](#), sponsored by Senator Michael Gianaris, would prohibit renters' insurance policies from refusing to provide coverage based upon the breed of the dog a policy holder has, which would bring renter's insurance in line with the current policy for homeowner's insurance.
- **Restricting the Devocalization of Cats and Dogs:** This bill, [S.3026](#), sponsored by Senator Michael Gianaris, would restrict the practice of surgical devocalization procedures on dogs and cats to only include situations that arise from a medical necessity.
- **Abandoned Animals Property Inspection:** This bill, [S.1784](#), sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, would require that any landlords or lessors inspect the property for any abandoned animals within three days of a property being vacated.
- **Clarifies the Felony for Aggravated Cruelty to Animals:** This bill, [S.703](#), sponsored by Senator Liz Krueger, eliminates the word "serious" from the "serious physical injury" language of the Agriculture and Markets law, in relation to aggravated cruelty to animals to ensure that someone attempting to physically harm an animal is appropriately penalized when they have impaired the physical condition or caused substantial pain to the animal. The previous standard only applied to permanent physical injury caused to an animal.
- **Enacting Tucker's Law:** This bill, [S.197](#) , sponsored by Senator Monica Martinez, enacts "Tucker's Law," which permits sentencing for aggravated animal cruelty to up to four years aligning it with default sentencing for Class E felonies. The current maximum sentence for aggravated animal cruelty is two years.
- **Exotic Animal Sale and Ownership Ban:** This bill, [S.252](#), sponsored by Senator Monica Martinez, expands the existing "wild animal" sale and possession ban to include certain "exotic animals" such as marsupials, sloths, anteaters, hyenas, bearcats, and zebras, among others.
- **Big Five African Trophies Act:** This bill, [S.5014](#), sponsored by Senator Luis Sepúlveda, would enact the "Big Five African Trophies Act" relating to banning the importation, transportation, sale, purchase, and possession of African Elephants, African Leopards, African Lions, Black Rhinoceroses, White Rhinoceroses, and African Giraffes.
- **Establishes Animal Fighting as a Criminal Act:** This bill, [S.3158](#), sponsored by Senator James Skoufis, would establish animal fighting as a designated criminal act and would permit sentencing enhancements for certain animal fighting offenses.

**Bill Sponsor Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris** said, "I am so proud to continue to pass legislation that gives a voice to our animal friends, who cannot speak for themselves. Inhumane practices like devocalization and insurance discrimination based on breeds are hopefully going to

be a thing of the past here in New York. Today's package will make it easier for New Yorkers to provide good homes to man's best friend.”

**Bill Sponsor Senator Nathalia Fernandez** said, “The passage of S3629A is a step toward ending the inhumane treatment of wild animals in traveling acts. For too long, animals like bears, wallabies, and primates have been forced to perform under conditions that are neither natural nor humane. This legislation reflects a clear choice: we will no longer allow cruelty to masquerade as entertainment. By closing this loophole, New York is taking necessary action toward improving animal welfare.”

**Bill Sponsor Senator Liz Krueger** said, “Our society can be judged in part by the way we treat the animals in our care. It's just common sense that if you set out to cause extreme physical pain to an animal, that counts as 'cruelty,' and you should get more than a slap on the wrist. I thank my colleagues for passing this bill today and standing up for the needs of vulnerable animals.”

**Bill Sponsor Senator Monica Martinez** said, “Today’s vote is a reminder that humanity’s laws have not always kept pace with the cruelty some individuals inflict on animals. The package of bills passed, including expansions of ‘Tucker’s Law’ and the ban on exotic animal sales, raises our standard of accountability toward our fellow beings. These proposals reflect our deeply held belief that compassion is a virtue that must be reflected in both our values and our laws. As cruelty to animals is often a precursor to future abuse against humans, this legislation not only protects animals but also affirms our commitment to ensuring both are treated with dignity and respect.”

**Bill Sponsor Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda** said, “I’m incredibly proud to see the Big Five African Trophies Act passed on the Senate floor—this is more than just legislation; it’s a reflection of who we are and what we stand for. As someone who has long believed in the dignity of all living beings, I introduced this bill because the brutal trophy trade targeting Africa’s most iconic animals—elephants, lions, leopards, rhinos, and giraffes—has no place in our society. These species are not souvenirs, they are vital to the ecosystems they inhabit and deserve our protection. With this legislation, New York is taking a bold stand against cruelty and exploitation and affirming our role as a global leader in wildlife conservation. I’m grateful to my colleagues and the advocates who stood behind this effort. Today, we celebrate not just a legislative win, but a moral one—one that echoes far beyond our state lines and speaks to the kind of world we want to leave behind for future generations.”

**Bill Sponsor Senator James Skoufis** said, “The laws that punish those who organize and profit from animal fighting are simply not strong enough. The charge often comes to no more than a fine paid by offenders, allowing organizers to go on with business as usual. These are barbaric acts with horrific results for the animals involved and often increase the number of drugs and illegal weapons trafficked during underground events, making our communities less safe for everyone. Animal fighting is a serious crime, the networks are complex and profitable, and there has to be punishment commensurate with the harm they inflict. I am gratified to see this bill pass the Senate. I join my colleagues in recognizing the gravity of this issue and look forward to seeing this entire package of bills signed into law.”

**Bill Ketzer, ASPCA's Senior Director of State Legislation, Eastern Division** said, “From providing critical capital resources for animal shelters statewide, to ending insurance industry breed discrimination, to improving the way our animal fighting laws are enforced and shutting down the Puppy Mill Pipeline, the New York State Senate is tackling some of the most pressing and difficult animal welfare issues of our time. We look forward to continuing our work with animal champions in the legislature to protect those who cannot speak for themselves.”

**Libby Post, Executive Director, NYS Animal Protection Federation** said, "Once again, the NYS Senate is showing its intent to protect the state's Companion Animals. From outlawing discrimination in renters' insurance to enhancing animal cruelty laws, we're taken a major step forward to protecting the health and welfare of our pets. New York's animal shelters care for homeless companion animals—the bills passed in the Senate today provides owners with the recourse they need to not have to surrender their dog based on breed and provides humane law enforcement with the legal tools it needs to put a stop to animal crimes."

**Brian Shapiro, New York State Director for Humane World for Animals** said, “The New York State Senate deserves recognition for once again leading the way on significant animal protection legislation. The animal welfare bills passed by the senate this session is meaningful and aimed at addressing needless cruelty, protecting wildlife, bolstering humane law enforcement, and helping to create safer communities for all of us. Animal advocates across the state value such leadership and we will work with the Senate to help these bills become law.”

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