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# New York Senate Majority Advances Legislation to Prevent, Prohibit, and Remedy Animal Mistreatment

(Albany, N.Y.) Today, the New York State Senate Majority advanced legislation to protect animals from abuse, abandonment and mistreatment, ensuring they are treated with the dignity and compassion they deserve. This package aims to hold animal abusers more accountable, while underscoring our conference's longstanding commitment to advocating for those who can't advocate for themselves.

This package includes legislation that would restrict animal devocalization to medical necessity; provide new civil authority to inspect a pet owner's property for suspected mistreatment; extend the maximum sentencing limit for an individual found guilty of a count of aggravated animal cruelty; and require the prompt inspection of vacated properties for abandoned animals.

**Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said, "It is incumbent upon us to advocate for those who cannot speak for themselves, including our beloved pets and animals. We remain committed to preventing and addressing animal mistreatment, ensuring animals are treated with dignity and compassion, and holding abusers accountable. I am proud of our conference's continued work to advance this legislative package to strengthen protections for animals across New York, and I thank today's sponsors for their dedication to safeguarding their welfare."

**Senate Deputy Leader, and bill sponsor, Mike Gianaris** said, "I am proud to pass legislation literally giving a voice to our four-legged friends who cannot speak for themselves. Inhumane practices like devocalization and breed discrimination will soon be a thing of the past. Today's action will make it easier for New Yorkers to provide good homes for their pets and ensure they are not being mistreated."

The legislation being passed by the Senate Majority includes:

- **Permits Microchipping Certain Animals in the Possession of Animal Rescue Organizations:** This bill, [S.5488](#), sponsored by Senator Comrie, would permit animal rescue organizations to microchip all dogs and cats in their possession not already implanted with one. A microchip would include the contact information of the organization in possession of the microchipped dog or cat. If any such animal has been adopted, it would include the contact information of the organization most recently in possession of it and the contact information of their current owner.
- **Prohibits the Use of Certain Animals in Traveling Acts:** This bill, [S.3629A](#), sponsored by Senator 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.

- **Forbids the Devocalization of Dogs or Cats Unless Medically Necessary:** This bill, [S.3026](#), sponsored by Senator Gianaris, would prohibit surgical devocalization of dogs and cats unless an underlying medical condition necessitates the procedure.
- **Establishes a Civil Remedy to Protect Companion Animals from Mistreatment:** This bill, [S.3073A](#), sponsored by Senator Gianaris, would authorize police, animal control officers, or humane society agents to petition a civil court for authorization to inspect a pet owner's property for evidence of companion animal mistreatment, and to schedule an animal care hearing within ten days of the issuance of this inspection order. It would also establish processes for a court-ordered forfeiture of a companion animal and requiring that the owner provide an appeals bond totaling the cost of care of that animal by a shelter.
- **Prohibits Insurance Policy Restrictions Based on Dog Breed:** This bill, [S.9207](#), sponsored by Senator Gianaris, would prohibit insurers from restricting renters' insurance policies based on the policyholder harboring or owning any dog of a specific breed or mixture of breeds.
- **Provides Access to Live Scan Fingerprinting Technology to SPCA Officers:** This bill, [S.1664](#), sponsored by Senator Hareckham, would provide an officer from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who has made an arrest, access to live scan fingerprinting technology.
- **Requires Landowners to Inspect Vacated Properties for Abandoned Animals:** This bill, [S.1784](#), sponsored by Senator Hinchey, would require owners and lessors of properties vacated due to abandonment, eviction, foreclosure, or for a similar reason to inspect that property within three days for abandoned animals. If an abandoned animal is found, the landowner would be required to notify animal control, police, or the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
- **Enacts "Tucker's Law":** This bill, [S.197](#), sponsored by Senator Martinez, would extend the maximum possible sentence of an individual found guilty of aggravated animal cruelty from two years to up to four years. In addition, it would allow greater judicial discretion to order consecutive or concurrent sentences when an individual is convicted of multiple counts of aggravated cruelty to animals.
- **Raises the Minimum Fine for Animal Abandonment:** This bill, [S.1741](#), sponsored by Senator Martinez, would raise the minimum fine for animal abandonment to five hundred dollars.
- **Enacts the "Big Five African Trophies Act":** This bill, [S.5014](#), sponsored by Senator Sepulveda, would ban the importation, possession, sale, and transportation of African lions, African leopards, African elephants, African giraffe, and black rhinoceros and white rhinoceros, or any part or product thereof, in New York.
- **Adds Animal Fighting to the List of Enterprise Corruption Crimes:** This bill, [S.3158](#), sponsored by Senator Skoufis, would add animal fighting to the list of enterprise corruption crimes.

**Bill sponsor Senator Leroy Comrie** said, “For many, a dog or cat is not just a pet, they are a source of companionship, support and comfort. [S.5488](#) gives our rescue organizations, shelters and animal protection groups a practical tool to help ensure that animals in their care can be properly identified, safely returned and connected back to the people or organizations responsible for them. Microchipping can make the difference when an animal is lost, abandoned or left without care. This legislation strengthens accountability while supporting the organizations doing this work every day. This is a step toward protecting vulnerable animals and giving them a better chance at safety, stability and a loving home.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Nathalia Fernandez** said, “By prohibiting the use of big cats, primates, bears, and other animals in certain traveling acts, New York is setting a clear standard that prioritizes humane treatment and the safety of both guests and trainers. I thank my colleagues for advancing this measure as part of a broader effort to strengthen animal protections across our state.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Pete Harckham** said, “Protecting those who cannot protect themselves is a fundamental responsibility of government, and that duty extends to animals. I’m proud that my bill granting SPCA officers’ access to live-scan fingerprinting was included in this package to strengthen protections and help prevent future abuse. I’m grateful to Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for her leadership on this issue, and to my colleagues for their commitment to safeguarding animals.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Michelle Hinchey** said, “Our pets depend on us for love and survival, and no animal should be left to fend for themselves because of their owner’s neglect. My bill requires vacated homes to be inspected for abandoned animals within three days of a tenant’s departure, and I’m proud to see it before the Senate today. This life-saving bill will ensure no pet goes without help when they need it most, and I want to thank the Majority Leader for including our bill in this package of legislation to protect animal welfare here in New York.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Monica Martinez** said, “Cruelty toward animals is a deliberate act of harm that demands consequences that match its seriousness. The package of bills passed today, including expansions of ‘Tucker’s Law’ and stronger penalties for abandonment, will better protect these vulnerable creatures from abuse and help address the pattern of violence that too often extends beyond them to people. I thank my colleagues in the Senate for continuing to move policies forward that confront this kind of inhumanity.”

**Bill sponsor Senator Luis Sepulveda** said, “As the sponsor of bill [S.5014](#), known as the ‘Big Five African Trophies Act,’ I reaffirm my commitment to protecting wildlife and combating the illegal trade of endangered species. New York cannot be complicit in the trophy trade that contributes to the extinction of iconic animals such as the African Elephant, Leopard, Lion, Black Rhino, White Rhino, and Giraffe. This legislation sends a clear message: our state stands on the side of conservation, ethics, and respect for global biodiversity. Moreover, this measure strengthens New York’s leadership in animal protection and sets an important precedent for other states and jurisdictions. By closing our markets to these products, we take concrete action to

discourage practices that endanger the survival of these species and reaffirm our moral responsibility to safeguard the planet's natural heritage 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 barbaric acts often increase the amount of drugs and illegal weapons trafficked during underground events, making our communities less safe for everyone. I am gratified to see this bill pass the Senate and I look forward to seeing this entire package of important legislation signed into law.”

**Executive Director of the NYS Animal Protection Federation Libby Post** said, “By passing this package of bills, the State Senate has passed some of the most consequential companion animal bills in recent years. From renters’ insurance to civil remedy to adding dog fighting to the state’s organized crime statutes, the Senate leadership has shown that there is political will to protect our companion animals who rely on us to be their voice. The Federation thanks the Senate leadership and members for taking these bold steps.”

**New York Director of Humane World for Animals Brian Shapiro** said, “In passing this meaningful package of animal protection bills, the New York State Senate has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing animal welfare measures and improving public safety for all of us. Supporting our shelters, ending breed discrimination for renter’s insurance, and protecting wild animals from cruel and outdated traveling acts, shows that the Senate has positioned itself — once again — as a leading body that can get things done, helping to create a more humane world here in New York for both people and animals.”

**ASPCA’s Senior Director of State Legislation, Eastern Division, Bill Ketzer** said, “From providing crucial capital resources for animal shelters, to ending insurance industry breed discrimination, to improving the way our animal fighting laws are enforced and addressing animal homelessness by advancing measures to keep people and pets together, the New York State Senate consistently tackles some of the most pressing and challenging issues facing animals today. We look forward to continuing our work with animal champions in the legislature to protect those who cannot speak for themselves.”

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