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Newark, N.J.

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Protect Animal Rights

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TRENTON - Governor Phil Murphy today signed S1923 and S2674 into law to further protect animal rights across New Jersey.

"As long-time dog owners, animal welfare is close to my and Tammy's hearts," said **Governor Phil Murphy**. "I am proud to sign these bills that will protect animals in danger of abuse and treat our four-legged residents with the compassion they deserve."

S2674 revises the law to make it easier for law enforcement officers to rescue animals whose life or health are in danger.

S1923 changes municipal court requirements to allow more consideration of abusive circumstances in cases where dogs are at risk of euthanasia. The bill also prohibits courts from declaring a dog to be potentially dangerous for causing bodily injury in the act of defending its owner from a person committing or attempting to commit a crime against them.

"No animal deserves to be abused or neglected," said **Assemblyman Bruce Land**. "Unfortunately, some animals wind up in dangerous, potentially life-threatening environments. This new law will make it easier for officers to rescue more animals in need of help and set them on a path to find a loving home."

"Animal cruelty is abuse, plain and simple," said **Assemblyman Matt Milam**. "We will not tolerate animal cruelty in New Jersey, and this law will strengthen our efforts to bring abused animals to safety by enabling law enforcement to intervene when necessary."

"The decision to end a life, whether that life is that of a human or of another species, is an incredibly difficult one, and one which should warrant appropriate reasoning and rationale," said **Assemblyman Gordon Johnson**. "While protecting the lives of our residents is our first and foremost priority, there is no need to unnecessarily euthanize a living creature based on a mere suspicion of potential future danger when there may not be enough evidence to suggest that the dog is truly that dangerous."

"New Jersey is one of only nine states with laws that allow euthanization of dogs that participated in dog fighting, without any consideration for the dog's actual behavior, according to the ASPCA," said **Assemblywoman Carol Murphy**. "It isn't fair or humane to punish a dog so severely if they may not pose a real threat to other animals or people. With this new law, the determination process of euthanization will be far more just."

"It's heartbreaking to think that underserving dogs have been euthanized in New Jersey when rehabilitation may

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have been a better option,” **said Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly**. “Fortunately, those days are over. Hundreds of canine lives will be saved under this new law, and they’ll have chance to find forever, caring homes.”

“There is a negative stigma associated with dogs who have suffered through dog fighting and because of this, they cannot be adopted due to the assumption they will harm people,” **said Senator Troy Singleton**. “Yet, many of these former fighting dogs pose no threat to humans. They want to be loved like every other dog. By dropping the stigma, we will see more of these former fighting dogs re-adapt to society and find loving homes.”

“This is a lifeline for pets that are visibly subjected to neglect and abuse,” **said Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez**. “There are pet owners callously failing to provide the necessary care to their furry family members, and that’s what they are, family. It is imperative that officers have the authority to act swiftly in scenarios where removal is deemed vital to ensuring the safety and well-being of an animal.”

“Unfortunately, some dog owners want to train their pets to be aggressive and dangerous creatures,” **said Senator Vin Gopal**. “That does not mean, however, that every dog bite, every incident, is the result of the dog being vicious. I sponsored this legislation because as a state, we need to make sure that dangerous dogs are not a threat to public safety, but we also need to give credence to incidents provoked, not by the dog’s training but by human behavior and outside circumstance.”

“The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) applauds Governor Murphy for affixing his signature on these two important animal protection bills, which will better defend and help innocent animals left in dire circumstances by no fault of their own,” **said Brian R. Hackett**, HSUS New Jersey State Director. “S2674 strengthens our state’s proper outdoor shelter and tethering restriction law for pets left outdoors, passed two years ago, making it the strongest and most comprehensive in the country. S1923 joins New Jersey with 41 other states which have ensured that canine victims of illegal dogfighting are treated humanely after being seized from cruel fighting rings. HSUS appreciates the efforts of the bills’ legislative sponsors, and we look forward to continuing to work with Governor Murphy and the Legislature on animal protection efforts, making New Jersey a leader in animal protection.”

“The ASPCA thanks Governor Murphy and the New Jersey State Legislature for enacting these important humane bills that will spare dogs, service animals, and pets from cruelty,” **said Debora Bresch**, Senior State Legislative Director for ASPCA. “With the enactment of these vital protections, it will no longer be permissible to unfairly label and confine or even destroy canine dogfighting victims based on their abusive pasts, and law enforcement will have needed clarity regarding their authority to protect animals who are at risk of injury or death due to inhumane treatment.”

“By signing this lifesaving piece of legislation, Governor Murphy has ensured that all dogs will be treated as individuals in New Jersey, even those who have sustained horrific abuse,” **said AJ Albrecht**, Best Friends Animal Society Legislative attorney.

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