



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham's Bill to Help SPCA Police Fight Animal Cruelty Passes Unanimously in Senate

PETE HARCKHAM March 6, 2024

| ISSUE: **SENATOR HARCKHAM. SD40, SPCA, ANIMAL CRUELTY, ANIMAL ABUSE, PROTECT OUR PETS**



Sen. Harckham with canine friend in Yorktown, NY

*Albany, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham announced today that his bipartisan legislation to aid the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in its longstanding efforts in bringing people to justice who deliberately maim and kill animals was passed unanimously in the Senate.

Harckham's legislation (S.1182) will permit SPCA officers statewide to have access to the live scan fingerprinting system used by law enforcement agencies following an arrest. The fingerprinting access will allow the SPCA officers to complete the arrest procedures without the assistance of any other law enforcement personnel or agencies, which will save time and ensure that accused individuals do not evade justice. Currently, most SPCA officers in New York must process their arrests through other law enforcement agencies.

"SPCA police officers need to have the full resources that will help them in their mission to protect defenseless pets and other animals from cruelty and neglect," said Harckham. "With live scan fingerprinting technology at their ready, these officers can know immediately if accused individuals have a history of animal abuse or are wanted for other violent crimes. This streamlining of the policing process will benefit our communities in countless ways while bringing greater justice to animals everywhere."

Harckham noted that the idea for the legislation was spurred by experiences Putnam County SPCA officers shared about having to find a law enforcement agency to help with fingerprinting individuals suspected of animal cruelty and abuse. In some cases, delays in obtaining fingerprints allowed suspects to stay free when they should have been fully booked and held for other outstanding warrants.

The number of animal cruelty cases in New York each year is impossible to calculate, as most instances of abuse and violence against animals are not reported. Neglect is the most common form of animal cruelty, followed by hoarding of animals and actual physical abuse and violence. SPCAs across New York noted a rise of animal cruelty because of problems relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, including cost of living increases, behavioral health issues and the expiration of eviction moratoriums.

According to Humane Society International, 85% of people arrested for animal abuse or cruelty have had multiple past arrests, an overwhelming majority of them felonies. Also, 70% of those who committed domestic violence were also found to be animal abusers.

Harckham's bill passed in the Senate 60-0. A companion bill to Harckham's is in committee in the State Assembly, where it was introduced by Asm. Linda Rosenthal.

"Animal cruelty crimes are especially heinous in that they are done to the weakest of the weak: animals," said Chief Ken Ross of the Putnam County SPCA. "These are gateway crimes to violent crimes against humans and have close ties to child abuse, adult abuse and domestic violence. When we approached Senator Harckham about this legislation, he understood its importance and has worked to have it passed and signed into law. Our ability to streamline the process during an arrest allows us to identify the person committing these crimes. We are truly grateful to Senator Harckham and his staff for their perseverance in getting this legislation to the governor's desk."

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2023-S1182**

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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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Provides access to live scan fingerprinting to society for the prevention of cruelty to animals officers

January 10, 2023

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Pete Harckham**

Do you support this bill?