



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo Says Senate Hearing Will Focus on Rise of Animal Abuse

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 30, 2012

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### **Griffo Announces Senate Hearing to Get Tough on Most Serious Animal Abuse Cases**

(Albany) - Senator Joseph A. Griffo (R-C-IP, Rome) today said that the State Senate will hold a Public Hearing in Utica next week to examine tougher state actions to curb the alarming rise in animal abuse.

Griffo confirmed that the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture, chaired by Senator Patty Ritchie, will convene a hearing on Wednesday, May 9th, 2:30 p.m., on the 1st floor of the State Office Building in Utica. The Senate Agriculture Committee is charged with reviewing most legislative initiatives dealing with companion animals.

“I am sickened and alarmed at the increase in serious cases of animal abuse and neglect across our region,” Griffo said, referencing the case of a West Utica man who was charged after both dead and emaciated dogs were found in his apartment and the report of a Utica couple faced with neglecting and starving animals (mink). “Anyone who treats a living thing with the kind of callous disregard and downright cruelty that we are forced to witness through media reports about these incidents deserves to face the toughest possible punishments. I think that we all know there are strong links between the abuse of animals

and the tendencies to abuse people. Mistreating an animal in such a way to sicken it nearly to death or starve it to death or beat it to death is not a small little incident that should be treated with a slap on the wrist or a small fine.”

Griffo said that in the past, he has supported bills that would strengthen the protection that state law provides to companion animals, and that he hopes recent cases, including the Utica incident, will spark urgency from fellow legislators in Albany to take action. Griffo noted that while the State Legislature will hold its 2012 Animal Advocacy Day on June 13th in Albany, he emphasized acting now. “It is a function of our government to take strong action that protects the most vulnerable members of our society. We will examine the increase in multiple-animal incidents and in devastating cruelty that we have witnessed in recent months and years and act in Albany, before it gets even worse,” he said. “We have taken action to protect children. We have taken action to protect adults. Our work is not complete unless we take further action that will ensure animals are not mistreated unto death by people who should not be allowed to ever, every own an animal again and who should be paying the full price for intentionally treating a companion animal in such a way that has led to death.”

Griffo also pointed to legislation (S.946) passed in the Senate two weeks ago, that would make stealing a licensed dog or cat a felony and takes into account the monetary and emotional value of a pet.

Senator Joseph Griffo remarked that he grew up with fond memories of a large family dog, and was dismayed to learn about the latest animal abuse case in Oneida County. Griffo says he'd advocate for more education, so that kids can learn at a young age about the appropriate treatment of animals and for stronger laws to protect companion animals.

"Starting at a young age, there needs to be a cultural change that animal cruelty should not be condoned," Senator Griffo said.

There are a number of bills that have come before the legislature on animal cruelty. Griffo is the sponsor of a bipartisan bill calling to establish an animal abuser registry statewide, with community notification requirements. So far there has not been a vote on that bill.

Griffo said that he would also like to see Buster's Law tightened. Buster's Law addresses aggravated cruelty to animals, making it a felony charge if a person is found guilty of aggravated cruelty to animals when, with no justifiable purpose, a person intentionally kills or causes serious physical injury to a companion animal with aggravated cruelty. The law applies to pets and not hunting, fishing, or farming animals. It was coined for a cat, named Buster, who was deliberately set on fire.