



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## On 'Animal Advocacy Day,' Senate Ok's Ritchie Bill to Crack Down on Animal Cruelty

PATTY RITCHIE June 3, 2015

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### **Continuing Senator's Efforts to Protect Pets and Help Them Find Safe Homes**

The State Senate marked "Animal Advocacy Day" at the State Capitol Wednesday by passing a series of bills to protect animals, including a measure sponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie that would double prison sentences for abusing an animal in the presence of a child.

"As a pet owner, I feel very strongly that it's our responsibility to provide safe homes for our pets and protect them from abuse," said Senator Ritchie, a dog owner of "Gunner," a Yellow

Lab, who has been teaming with local animal shelters in Central and Northern New York to promote responsible animal adoptions through her online “Pet of the Week” effort.

“An act of cruelty intended to harm an animal is heartbreaking, but it’s especially heartbreaking when animals are abused in the presence of a child. This bill seeks not only to protect their innocence, but also to safeguard animals by cracking down on those who seek to harm them.”

The bill, S.4641, would double the maximum sentence—to up to four years in prison—for animal abuse when a child is present. The measure was one of 10 bills approved by the Senate that seek to protect animals from abuse and maltreatment, and crack down on “pet theft” and abandonment of animals.

Meantime, Senator Ritchie announced that 75 pets have now been featured as part of her “Pet of the Week” initiative, in which pictures and information about adoptable cats and dogs from the Jefferson County SPCA, Oswego Humane Society and St. Lawrence Valley SPCA are published on her official website, and on her Facebook social media page. According to the shelters, the effort has helped to raise interest in adoption.

“It’s estimated that 2.7 million healthy shelter pets are not adopted each year, and only about 30 percent of pets in homes come from shelters or rescues,” said Karen Cunningham of the St. Lawrence Valley SPCA. “Some of the pets that end up at our shelter have been abused or neglected, and we work every day to encourage people to open both their hearts—and their homes—to these animals. We’d like to thank Senator Ritchie for partnering with us, and allowing her thousands of Facebook friends to learn more about the animals at our shelter who are looking for loving homes.”

Senator Ritchie played a key role in enacting other measures to crack down on animal abuse, including:

- \*The new law that gives local governments authority to enact stronger laws to crack down on abusive puppy mills;

- \* A measure that makes it a crime to possess dog fighting equipment or other devices used to train fighting dogs;

- \* Legislation that strengthens penalties for theft and mistreatment of pets. This new measure will increase the maximum fine—for the first time since 1970—from \$200 to \$1,000 for those who harm, steal or transport a pet that's not their own.

For more information on Senator Ritchie's "Pet of the Week" program and other initiatives to protect animals from cruelty, please visit her website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).

*(Attn. photo editors: Senator Ritchie is pictured in the attached photo at the Capitol with visitors from "Paws Across Oswego County," a non-profit animal rescue.)*