



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## COMPANION ANIMALS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN NEW YORK'S CAPITOL

SUSAN SERINO June 7, 2016

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ALBANY, NY—As the Co-Chair of the New York State Animal Advocacy Day, Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) today helped put the spotlight on the needs of companion animals across the state and announced that her bill aimed at protecting the animals from domestic violence passed in the Senate.

“For so many New Yorkers, our pets are an extension of our families and the thought of someone causing them injury is unfathomable. However, the reality is that far too many animals find themselves in harm’s way. This event is about the safety of our entire families and about giving voice to the needs of New York’s thousands of companion animals to ensure that they are not left in the shadows. I thank the advocates from across the state who have taken the time to travel to Albany to stand up for our companion animals who cannot fight for themselves.”

Senator Serino joins Senator Phil Boyle (R,C,I-Suffolk County) and Assemblyman Jim Tedisco (R,C,I-Glenville) in hosting the bi-partisan event that brings, legislative leaders, law enforcement and hundreds of pet owners and animal advocates to Albany to network with one another and to push for legislation aimed at protecting animals and people from abuse.

In honor of the day, the Senate passed Senator Serino’s bill (S. 7394A) that would extend protections to the pets of victims of domestic abuse by giving the court discretion to forbid contact between the abuser and any pet that is cared for by the victim.

“Study after study has linked domestic abuse with animal abuse,” said Senator Serino. “Too often, even when victims of abuse recognize the need to leave their abuser, they cannot bring themselves to do so for fear of what will happen to their pets. If we truly want to empower victims to move forward and begin rebuilding their lives, we need to ensure that there are no strings attached and part of that means ensuring the safety of the pets they love.”

A study by the American Humane Association found that 71% of pet-owning women entering women's shelters reported that their batterer had injured, maimed, killed or threatened family pets for revenge or to psychologically control their victim. Further, according to the Urban Resource Institute, 48% of victims of domestic violence do not leave

their abuser because they fear what would happen to their pet.

Currently, orders of protection only prohibit the respondent from intentionally injuring or killing a pet belonging to the petitioner or a minor child in their household. Knowing that the petitioner has violated the order of protection would serve little comfort in the tragic event that someone lost their pet. Senator Serino's bill aims to ensure that more is being done to prevent that from happening by giving the court discretion to forbid any contact between the respondent and the pet.

Throughout the duration of Animal Advocacy Day, advocates met with their representatives to push for "Kirby & Quigley's Law" (A.1596/S.2936) which would make it a felony punishable with 2 years in jail and a \$5,000 fine for harming a companion animal while committing another felony. The bill, named for two Capital Region dogs that were shot and killed during a burglary, passed in the Senate three times, most recently in March of this year by a margin of 59-1. Following the passage of the bill in the Senate, Senator Serino joined Assemblyman Tedisco and Denise Krohn, owner of Kirby and Quigley, at a press conference in Albany calling on the Assembly to finally pass this important piece of legislation.

Serino concluded, "When we advocate for the safety of our companion animals, we advocate for the safety of our entire families. That is what Animal Advocacy Day is all about and it is our hope that awareness for the safety of our animals extends far beyond this one day."