



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

At PetCon NYC, Senate Deputy Leader Gianaris Proposes Legislation To Ban Barbaric “Devocalization” Surgeries On Animals, Stripping Them Of Ability To Communicate

MICHAEL GIANARIS December 16, 2019

| ISSUE: **DOMESTIC ANIMAL WELFARE, DEVOCALIZATION, CATS, DOGS, PETS**



NEW YORK, N.Y. – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris introduced new legislation to ban devocalization, the brutal surgery to inhibit animals from using their voices. Senator Gianaris announced the legislation while speaking on a panel at PetCon NYC, a nationwide gathering of animal influencers and enthusiasts.

“We need to be the voice of animals who cannot speak for themselves. With this ban, we fight back against a violent procedure meant to convenience humans at great pain to their companions,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “I am pleased to author this legislation and will continue fighting for the animals who enrich our lives every day.”

Devocalization, also known as ventriculocordectomy, debarking, devoicing, or bark softening, is a surgical procedure to alter or remove tissues in the vocal chords of an animal to muffle or eliminate their bark or meow. The brutal procedure is done either through the oral cavity or directly through the larynx and can lead to respiratory issues in animals, psychological damage, and risks putting them in danger.

“We are honored that Senator Gianaris chose to announce this important legislation at PetCon. Senator Gianaris continues to put animal rights at the forefront, and as animal lovers we are lucky to have him giving a voice to our furry best friends,” said **Loni Edwards, Founder and CEO of The Dog Agency**.

“Voters For Animal Rights applauds Senator Gianaris for his leadership in introducing this bill to make the cruel practice of devocalization of cats and dogs illegal in New York,” said **Allie Feldman Taylor, President of Voters for Animal Rights**. “Ventriculocordectomy, or the surgical removal of vocal cords, oftentimes causes complications and post operative pain, difficulty breathing and other serious health issues. Senator Gianaris is leading this issue to create a better state for cats and dogs.”

“Devocalization is an invasive surgical procedure that exposes animals to unnecessary discomfort and potential long term negative physical effects such as scarred vocal cord tissue, which can lead to chronic coughing, gagging, and pneumonia,” said **Bill Ketzer, senior director of state legislation for the ASPCA, Northeast region**. “We thank Senator Gianaris for raising awareness of this practice and for seeking to ensure it is only performed by a duly-

licensed veterinarian under very limited circumstances. We are grateful to Senator Gianaris for his continued leadership in advancing protections for all animals, including those being shipped from puppy mills to pet stores in our communities, and we look forward to working with him to shut down the puppy mill pipeline by ending the retail sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in New York pet stores.”

“We applaud Senator Gianaris for introducing legislation to prohibit inhumane devocalization surgery, an invasive procedure which involves cutting an animal’s vocal cords,” said **Brian Shapiro, New York State Director for the Humane Society of the United States**. “During and after the surgery, the animal may become vulnerable to the risk of bleeding, contracting infections and inhaling liquids and solid foods into the lungs. There are humane ways to deal with vocalization issues than by cutting an animal’s vocal cords, since this procedure fails to address the underlying causes of excessive vocalization and devocalizing an animal provides no guarantee that a dog or cat will be kept in their home.

“There’s no reason for devocalization of our companion animals. We thank Senator Gianaris for taking this principled, animal-loving stand,” said **Libby Post, Executive Director of the New York State Animal Protection Federation**. “Barking is a way for a dog to let their humans know there’s a problem—whether it be an intruder or a fire or a person in trouble. Barking is part of a dog’s behavior. Good training can stop unnecessary barking. There’s no need to put any animal through unnecessary surgery that is a potential health hazard.”

A companion bill sponsored by Assemblymember Ken Zebrowski passed the Assembly in prior sessions.

Senator Gianaris is a leader on animal welfare issues in the Senate, passing the nation’s first-ever statewide ban on cat declawing. Additionally, he leads the fight to prevent retail pet stores from selling animals from puppy mills and instead promote pet adoption.

Photos from PetCon NYC are available here: <http://bit.ly/34ofNoU>.

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2019-S6904

- Introduced

- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
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- - Passed Assembly
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- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Restricts the performance of surgical devocalization procedures on dogs and cats

December 13, 2019

In Senate Committee [Domestic Animal Welfare](#)

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