

Making a Difference in Your Community

The Delegate Forum, December 4, 2006.

Ms. Sprouse began her informative program with the **AKC Legislation Department's Mission Statement - Work with:**

- Elected officials,
- Dog clubs,
- Media
- Dog owners

to monitor and positively impact federal, state and local legislation governing responsible dog ownership.

The department accomplishes this mission by working closely with the

- AKC Public Education Department
- State Dog Federations
- Parent, local, and regional Dog Clubs
- Over 1000 dog club members who volunteer to educate others about pending canine legislation as Legislative Liaisons.

In 2006 the department

- Monitored over 500 state bills
- Worked on 150 local ordinances,
- Supported the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006
- The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act
- Hosted the 5th Annual AKC Lobby Day in Washington, DC.

Sprouse went on to discuss how added staff, a continuation of the Regional Legislative Seminars and an expanded selection of appropriate materials give a positive outlook for the department in 2007.

Current services by the department include:

- The monthly e-newsletter *Taking Command* ,
- 22 official position statements on AKC letterhead,
- Department information packets and brochures,
- Plus assistance with the legislative process and Letterhead lobbying.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? - Lobbying 101: Getting Started

1. **Register to vote and do it!** The goal of every politician is to get re-elected and to do that they need to make a positive impression on YOU, the people who elect them. Politicians must view the AKC as a constituency and for that to happen we need to get our numbers up in order to have a bigger impact.
2. **It is important that you**
 - a. Meet with your local representatives and their staff,
 - b. Invite them to dog shows
 - c. While you should attend political events and fundraisers.

3. Become active in your community

- a. Work with legislators to host a showing of *Safety Around Dogs* or *Best Friends*;
- b. Write a local 'Responsible Pet Owner Column' or the like;
- c. Host a CGC event; and hold Responsible Dog Ownership Day activities.

4. What should you do when you hear about a proposal?

- a. Contact the city or county clerks office;
- b. Find out the status of the proposal;
- c. Check out its timeline;
- d. Get a copy of the existing dog law;
- e. Get a copy of the proposal;
- f. Determine what changes are being proposed;
- g. Find out what 'problems' they are looking to solve;
- h. Collect news reports on the proposal.
- i. Work together.
- j. Contact the AKC Legislation Department for help, as well as
 - local dog clubs,
 - state federations
 - local animal oriented businesses to help spread the word.

5. If a strong campaign against a proposal is required:

- a. Meet and educate legislators and staff;
- b. Start a letter and email campaign (always remember to be professional and polite)
- c. Take advantage of the AKC Lobbying pamphlets;
- d. Prepare speakers (consult AKC Talking Points and identify speakers); and
- e. Try to offer alternatives if appropriate.

Breeding Restrictions and Dangerous Dogs/Breed-Specific Legislation

Breeding restrictions are a major threat to all of us. They may include mandatory spay and neuter laws which can require the spaying and neutering of ALL pets, and levy unreasonable license differential for unaltered pets and support shelter sterilization laws. Breeder permits frequently require litter permits to breed and severely limit the number of litters allowed.

AKC talking points on breeding restrictions may include:

- Mandatory spay/neuter is ineffective;
- Does not address irresponsible ownership;
- Mandatory spay/neuter is difficult to enforce;
- Irresponsible dog ownership is best addressed through well enforced leash and nuisance laws;
- Public education that teaches responsible pet ownership is the only way to change behavior;
- Unfairly targets responsible breeders who are an asset to the community.

Fancier exceptions to these laws are not enough and frequently include:

- High intact animal or litter permit fees;
- Restrictions that can be too severe;
- They usually do not provide for extenuating circumstances.

The AKC supports reasonable, effective legislation governing dangerous dogs **while opposing any legislation that singles out specific-breeds.**

AKC talking points on the subject are:

- Breed specific laws increase cost for the community;
- Countless national animal organizations oppose Breed-Specific Legislation because it does not work;
- BSL does not just mean ‘bully’ breeds;
- They are a threat to responsible dog ownership;
- These ineffective laws affect us all (A bad dog law is problematic for all dog owners).

Dangerous dogs and breed-specific legislation should:

- Establish clear definitions;
- Establish defenses such as provocation;
- Establish procedure for determining a dog dangerous and an appeals process;
- Establish care, conditions and penalties for problematic dogs.

Remember:

The AKC Canine Legislation department is here to help you. Only working together can we retain our rights as responsible dog owners.

Contact the Canine Legislation Department at:

Doglaw@AKC.ORG

919-816-3720

www.AKC.ORG