



Hearing on Public Protection

sumaxvic

to:

luther

02/05/2014 09:38 AM

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February 5, 2014

Finance Committee

New York State Senate

416 State Capitol

Albany, NY 12247

Attn: Carole Luther

Dear Senators:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comment regarding the Joint Budget Hearing on Public Protection. I am a former NYS Trooper retiring after 26 years of service, and am currently the Cruelty Consultant for the New York State Humane Association (NYSHA). On behalf of NYSHA, I write to express strong support for A775, an act to move New York statutes pertaining to animal cruelty from Agriculture and Markets Law into the Penal Law. Through my years of experience working on cases of animal cruelty, abuse and neglect, I know that A775 would help to greatly enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement and the judiciary regarding the protection of animals.

The mistreatment of animals can result in significant public safety, health and quality of life concerns for communities across New York State. The state is home to countless species including, beloved family pets, animals used in entertainment and recreation, and animals in the agricultural industry. The diversity of animals and cases faced by officers can make these situations particularly challenging. Better training for law enforcement would help to maximize the response by officers, and ensure they are best equipped to handle cases of animals in need.

The Penal Law is a more appropriate location for animal cruelty statutes. Police are mandated to

enforce Article 26 of the Agriculture and Markets Law (which encompasses the majority of New York's anti-cruelty laws), however, currently their training focuses on Penal and Criminal Procedure Law, not provisions related to animals. Moving these statutes out of Agriculture and Markets Law would put these crimes on par with other offenses; and help to streamline criminal procedure training, legal terminology and the maintenance of records and statistical data. This could only help to enhance efforts of law enforcement officers charged with the difficult job of protecting the people, communities and animals of New York State.

NYSHA currently works closely with law enforcement statewide. For nearly 15 years, we have been conducting animal anti-cruelty law workshops for officers, and providing additional support on individual cases they face in the field. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we are only able to reach a fraction of the police officers within this state. Officers who have had the opportunity to participate in our trainings, indicated that the information learned enabled them to further their investigations into cases of domestic violence, child and elder neglect and abuse, animal fighting, drug trafficking and the illegal possession of guns.

Shouldn't all officers have the benefit of the same training and support?

This critical legislation would improve accessibility and understanding of animal cruelty statutes, enhance law enforcement response to cases, and promote enforcement and prosecution of these crimes to ensure better outcomes for animal victims. For all these reasons, NYSHA respectfully requests that members of the New York State Legislature support and urge passage of bill A775.

Sincerely,

Susan C. McDonough – New York State Humane Association 518-488-9318

Consultant on Animal Cruelty Issues