

AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB
Delegates Meeting
March 10, 2026

Gina M. DiNardo, President in the Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. ET.
(National Anthem played.)

Delegates were reminded to check in at the reception desk for attendance purposes. When Staff prints the yellow-colored badge, the Delegate is automatically marked as present.

The Chair introduced the persons seated on the dais: Chairman, Dr. Thomas M. Davies; Vice Chairman, Dr. Michael Knight; Joan Corbisiero, Professional Registered Parliamentarian; Sheila H. Goffe, Executive Secretary; Shari Cathey, the Court Reporter.

The Chair announced that this meeting was the annual election of the Directors.

The Executive Secretary read the report of the Nominating Committee.

Ms. Goffe: Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 2, of the Charter and Bylaws of The American Kennel Club, the NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- Gail LaBerge, Chair – Atlanta Obedience Club
- Gretchen Bernardi – Mississippi Valley Kennel Club
- Ellen Hardin – Golden Retriever Club of America
- Barbara Shaw – Greater Collin Kennel Club
- Matthew Townsend – Carolina Working Group Association

Alternates:

- Robert (Bob) Rynkiewicz – Eastern German Shorthaired Pointer Club
- Monica Stoner – Saluki Club of America

appointed by the Board of Directors at its July 2025 meeting have nominated the following Delegates as candidates for such vacancies on the Board of Directors as to be filled at the next Annual Meeting of the Club on March 10, 2026. There are 3 vacancies for the Class of 2030.

Nominees for the Class of 2030

- Dominic Palleschi Carota – Pharaoh Hound Club of America
- Jason Hoke – Chain O'Lakes Kennel Club
- Thomas S. Powers – Kennel Club of Beverly Hills

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 4, of the Charter and Bylaws of The American Kennel Club, the following Delegates have been endorsed in writing by the required number of Delegates as a candidate for the vacancies on the Board of Directors for the Class of 2030, to be filled at the next Annual Meeting of the Club on March 10, 2026:

- Carl C. Ashby III – United States Kerry Blue Terrier Club, Inc.
- Karen J. Burgess – Greater Clark County Kennel Club, Inc.

- Patricia M. Cruz – Heart of the Plains Kennel Club
- Sue Goldberg – Lewiston-Auburn Kennel Club, Inc.
- Laurie Maulucci – South Windsor Kennel Club
- Lisa Peterson – Norwegian Elkhound Association of America, Inc.

Ms. DiNardo reported that the Bylaws state that nominations may not be made from the floor. Nominations, therefore, closed on November 15, 2025. Delegates were reminded that elections, in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order*, require a majority vote to elect.

The election procedure is overseen by the accounting firm of KPMG. The ballots are scanned and tabulated electronically. All candidates were offered the opportunity to observe the election procedures.

(Recess for voting.)

(Session resumed.)

The Executive Secretary to read the names of Delegates seated since the last meeting:

Debarah Billings, Blountville, TN, to represent Biewer Terrier Club of America

Mark Brandsema, Media, PA, to represent Delaware County Kennel Club

Kate DeSanto, China Spring, TX, to represent American Wirehaired Pointing Griffon Association

Crystal Messersmith, Columbia, SC, to represent Columbia Kennel Club

Mary Miller, Lexington, KY, to represent Lexington Kennel Club

Isabel Ososki, Troy, IL, to represent Collie Club of America

Ricki V. Silveria, Mount Pleasant, SC, to represent Siberian Husky Club of America

Alan E. Welch, Esq., Whitehouse Station, NJ, to represent Kennel Club of Philadelphia

The following Delegates, who were attending their first meeting since being officially seated, were introduced from the floor:

Mark Brandsema, to represent Delaware County Kennel Club

Donald Bright, to represent Tidewater Kennel Club of Virginia

Erin Keen, to represent Myrtle Beach Kennel Club

Crystal Messersmith, to represent Columbia Kennel Club

Mary Miller, to represent Lexington Kennel Club

Isabel Ososki, to represent Collie Club of America

Ricki V. Silveria, to represent Siberian Husky Club of America

Alan Welch, Esq., to represent Kennel Club of Philadelphia

The minutes of the December 12, 2025 Delegate Meeting were published in the online January 2026 issue of the *AKC Gazette*. The complete transcript was posted on the Delegate Portal on AKC's website. There were no corrections, and the minutes were adopted as published.

The **Oak Ridge Kennel Club** was duly elected as a member of The American Kennel Club.

Dr. Thomas Davies delivered the Chairman's Report as follows:

Good morning. When we speak about the strength of the American Kennel Club, we rightly reflect on our history, our traditions, our standards, and our unwavering commitment to purebred dogs. But our strength is not defined by our legacy alone. It's demonstrated in how we lead. How we show up for our sport, how we serve the public, and how we position our organization for the future.

Peter Drucker once said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." That principle has been clearly reflected in the work accomplished in recent months.

Two of our flagship events – the 25th Annual AKC National Championship presented by Royal Canin and the AKC Meet the Breeds® in New York City, exemplify that forward-looking leadership. Each not only celebrated excellence, but reinforced the vitality, the relevance, and the enduring promise of the American Kennel Club.

The AKC National Championship once again demonstrated why it remains the gold standard in our sport. Held on December 13-14, 2025, at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, the event welcomed a grand total of 5,557 dogs competing for the title of *America's National Champion*, a remarkable showcase of depth, quality, and competition.

In addition, 1,602 entries competed for *Puppy and Junior of the Year* in the AKC/Royal Canin National All-Breed Puppy and Junior Stakes, while 1,040 dogs vied for *Best Bred-by-Exhibitor in Show*. Combined with the other weekend events, overall show entry totals exceeded 9,162 entries, reaffirming the AKC National Championship's standing as the largest dog show in North America.

That excellence was mirrored on the national stage. The 2025 AKC National Championship broadcast that aired on ABC television and ESPN2 on December 28, 2025, delivered a historic performance. In a highly competitive Sunday broadcast window, it averaged more than 1.35 million total viewers, making it the most successful airing since the franchise moved to ABC and ESPN2 six years ago.

Outside of the NFL, it was the highest-rated program in its time slot, ranking as the number one non-NFL sports special of the day between noon and 6 p.m. Out of more than 900 programs airing during that window, the AKC National Championship ranked 11th overall, maintaining a remarkably steady audience from start to finish. That level of performance speaks volumes about the strength of our sport and our brand.

AKC Meet the Breeds® held at the Javits Center on February 7-8, 2026, continues to be one of our most powerful opportunities for contact with the public. With more than 145 breeds represented and 38,000 dog lovers welcomed, the event brought our mission to life, educating the public and promoting responsible dog ownership, while reinforcing the importance of breed preservation through direct engagement with knowledgeable breeders, clubs, and enthusiasts.

A sincere thank you to all the clubs, the volunteers, and AKC staff whose dedication and hard work made Meet the Breeds such a success again. Their commitment is central to advancing the AKC mission and ensuring it resonates well beyond our community.

From world-class competition to meaningful public education, these events showcase not only the great dogs but the passion, the expertise, and the teamwork that the AKC puts behind everything we do.

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank our Delegates, clubs, exhibitors, volunteers, broadcast partners, and AKC staff, and all of you. These successes belong to all of us and reflect an organization that continues to be visible, relevant, and moving forward with confidence. Thank you. See you in June.

Ms. DiNardo delivered the President's Report as follows:

I'd like to share with you something I'm genuinely excited about this morning. I've established an AKC Breeder Focus Committee formed with the intention and deep respect for the people who sustain this organization, our breeders. I believe we must listen more closely, think more strategically, and act more decisively in how we support breeders. Special thanks to AKC staff members Vanessa Skou and Susan Myers for their work with this committee.

The committee serves as a consultative body focused on issues related to breeding, litter, and puppy registration. It will identify concerns, examine trends, and develop thoughtful recommendations to strengthen the value, accessibility, and integrity of AKC registration. Just as importantly, it is charged with helping us build stronger, more meaningful relationships with breeders. Our discussions have reinforced a simple truth. Without breeders, there is no AKC. No registrations, no events, no future generations of purpose-bred dogs. Breeders are not adjacent to our mission. They are central to it, and we need breeders to help drive the registry. Yet too many breeders do not feel valued. If we are serious about protecting and advancing purebred dogs, we must first protect and advance the responsible people who produce them. That begins with tangible support. In the years ahead, AKC will focus on practical tools and resources that recognize breeding as the serious, deliberate, and responsible work that it is. We will elevate the public conversation around ethical breeding confidently and unapologetically. Health-tested, purpose-bred dogs preserved to a standard represent a public good, and we must say so clearly and proudly. We're also exploring a structured breeder mentorship initiative, particularly for newcomers who often feel isolated or unsure of next steps. When a dog is placed on full registration, that moment should trigger connection, guidance, education, and support. Foundational education will also be visible, accessible, and positioned as essential, not optional. Our community must be more inclusive. Ethical breeders should find guidance and partnership, not barriers. The takeaway from this work is straightforward. Without breeders, nothing exists.

So, what must we do? We must be welcoming. We must reduce unnecessary barriers. We must provide clear education and meaningful support, and we must publicly champion ethical breeding. We must intentionally cultivate the next generation of responsible breeders.

Our Delegate experts play a vital role in this effort. Your leadership means reaching out, mentoring, replacing exclusivity with encouragement. Breeding excellence is sustained through relationships, knowledge transfer, and shared responsibility. If we want strong breeds, strong clubs, strong events, we must invest in the people who make them possible, our breeders. When AKC thrives, breeders thrive, and vice versa.
(Standing ovation.)

Thank you. We're all in this together, my friends.

Ted Phillips, CFO, delivered the Financial Report as follows:

Good morning. That standing ovation for Gina is how I start my day because I like working here! We all need to talk about one thing before we get into this presentation, and that's taxes. Nobody likes them. We all have to do them. For any of you who have a tax-exempt entity, please remember to file your 990s. I cannot give you tax advice, but I can encourage you to make sure to file. For calendar-year-organizations like AKC, ending December 31st, you have until May 15, 2026, unless you go on extension, if you need an accountant, there's a lot of CPAs like me out there that will help you. Ask them for free services, because we CPA's must do this to provide support for our exempt organizations.

This report that we're going to go through has two sections to it. The first one is what I would call a management discussion and analysis. A little different than the past, but it leads us to the 12 slides that I will take you through. It allows us to have a conversation about what's going on in the organization. It's a summary of the preliminary and unaudited financial results of operations for the year ended December 31, 2025.

Let's start out with understanding total revenues of \$94.2 million as compared to 2024, which were \$97.1 million. This is a 3 percent decrease versus 2024. Also, we are going to do a three-year look here, that it's a 6.8 percent decrease versus 2023, when revenues were \$101 million. Our primary line of business, as you all know, is registrations. The registration revenue over those three years has decreased by \$10 million due to lower activity. Since 2023, the number of dog registrations has decreased by 28 percent, from 608,000 to 441,000 in 2025. Again, this is a key driver that determines our operations. A corollary and most important metric is the number of litter registrations, and they have decreased by 27 percent since 2023 to 216,000. As a result of lower revenues and stable expenses over the past three years, we ended 2025 with a net loss of \$3.2 million. Total expenses are \$97.4 million, which is 2 percent higher than 2024, and 1 percent higher than 2023. This completes three years of consistent expense levels despite an inflationary environment, which, in terms of percentages, is much greater than these expense increases. Overall, we've managed to be operating expense neutral despite price inflation ranging from 6 to 8 percent and higher in the case of IT expenses. Also understand that management has had to work through health benefit increases as high as 17 percent, even after taking our health plans to market and offering additional options. To understand this, we must remember that the AKC staff population is 20 percent older than comparable organizations, and the increase for health costs are shared by the organization

and staff. The combination of staff costs and professional fees totals 70 percent of our annual operating expense budget.

Now, looking back to the beginning of 2025, our approved budget was \$5.5 million higher than where we ended the year. After the first quarter, we did a forecast, looking ahead, and our direction projected a \$9 million loss for the year. Following that analysis, we reduced planned expenses by \$5.5 million and re-evaluated how we operate the organization. This effort to reduce expenses was spearheaded by Gina and staff leadership, who set a mandate to provide services in a more efficient, less costly manner. This effort continues beyond 2025, and a full picture of the future cost structure will take shape in 2026, and will require several years to implement, but we will keep you updated. Please note that the budget plan recently approved for 2026 has total expenses comparable to 2025, despite a rising cost environment.

Let's go through some of the major programs of AKC in terms of revenue. Registration and events in 2025, totaled \$59.6 million versus the prior year of \$62.3 million, and as perspective, \$69.3 million in 2023. The other two primary revenue sources, or major programs, as we call them in the exempt organization world, are advertising, sponsorships, royalties, and product and service sales. Advertising has decreased, while sponsorships and royalties have held solid, but the overall decrease is about \$1.2 million due to lower advertising revenues, which we'll explain shortly. Product and service sales have increased by 7 percent or \$753,000, principally due to DNA health testing sales.

Looking at a deeper dive on dog registration and litter registration, you can see the decrease of \$2.7 million or 12 percent to \$19.9 million in 2025, on 441,126 registrations, versus \$22.5 million on 522,160 registrations in 2024. Again, as compared to 2023, we had 608,990 dog registrations on revenues of \$25.8 million. In 2025, litter registration revenue increased by \$1.4 million to \$11.4 million, as we revised methods of discounting, we adjusted certain prices despite a decrease in unit volume. Over these two years, litter registration revenues have increased due to strategy changes, not simply price changes. Here's your numbers. As we can see, when we look at the fuchsia box, those are your dog registration numbers at 441,000 in 2025, and 522,000 the prior year. Litters in the blue box, 214,000 versus 246,000. Related to registration, we have other sales and revenues for pedigrees and those good things like registration certificates, AKC Canine Partners™ for our mixed breeds, AKC Puppy Folders, and certificate transfers. Pedigrees, like other areas of our business, follow registration, so you can see that decrease by \$1 million or 18 percent in 2025 to \$4.5 million.

Now let's look at events in terms of base metrics. We have a 1 percent decrease in 2025, which is solid when you think about where we were in 2024 and 2023, so it's essentially flat. Our number of events has increased to 29,650, which is 1 percent higher, but an important comparison to 2023, that number 29,650, is 11 percent higher than 2023, so the outreach is strong. Here's our major sports revenues, Conformation, Companion, Performance, and Family Dog. We can see the revenue for 2025, for Conformation was \$5.9 million, or 3 percent lower than 2024, and flat versus 2023. Companion events revenue in 2025, totaled \$6.5 million

is 14 percent higher than 2023 and flat versus 2024. Performance events revenue in 2025 was \$4 million, or 8 percent higher than 2024, and again, 14 percent higher than 2023. Rounding out this area is the Family Dog program with \$3.9 million of revenue, which is consistent with 2024.

Sponsorship, advertising, and royalties, specifically advertising revenue, in the center boxes, you see the \$1.8 million decrease. Again, this tracks to registration. It's an important number to watch and understand that due to data privacy rules, changes in search engine optimization, the way searches are done, our advertising revenue have all been challenged. It's a key revenue line that we are evaluating and examining as we go forward. Sponsorship is the one that I wanted to really speak to because it's 11 percent of our revenue. This whole area is 18 percent of our total revenue, but sponsorship is 11 percent or \$10.8 million. It now sustains AKC's operation. It follows a vision that broadens awareness of the brand. Ron Furman and his team are doing an excellent job. This includes the Geico truck at ANC which was a \$1 million sponsorship. We appreciate support from our sponsors, certainly, from you, and obviously our breeders, as we try and broaden the awareness and knowledge of our brand. Here's the plug – look for us on the ESPN and ABC networks because content capture obviously drives our public presence.

Reviewing expenses, the total, as we mentioned earlier, was \$97.4 million, which is 2 percent higher than prior years. We are consistent with most service-based organizations because staff and professional fees are the principal expenses of our organization. Staff expenses here presented include travel for staff increased by 6 percent, which is the same increase as it was in 2024, over 2023. This is driven principally by market competition, health benefit costs, and a process we put in place where we evaluate travel costs on a quarterly basis, and we ask the hard questions: Do you need to go? And if you need to go, how effective are you? Fulfillment costs include delivering public events like ANC and AKC Meet the Breeds®, as well as product fulfillment, and that decreased slightly in 2025 by 3 percent. Rounding out the expenses, we have insurance, rent, and depreciation. That includes \$5.8 million of depreciation and amortization due to many years of building an internally developed software infrastructure. We will see that reliance because we use three-year depreciation on those projects for the next couple of years, and until we're able to sunset a majority of that, that number will stay with us. Insurance for property and liability, which is extremely well managed, has held steady at \$1.2 million, representing 1.2 percent of expenses, despite adding events. Our lease and rental expense for the entire organization is 3.9 percent of our total expenses, or \$3.9 million. AKC continues to support our charitable affiliates, the Museum of the Dog, the Canine Health Foundation, by contributing \$5.1 million of cash and in-kind support. Finally, in expenses, as required by our governance documents, AKC Bylaws, Article VII, Section 11, I'm reporting that the 2025 expense for the Board of Directors totaled \$491,445.

The balance sheet presents our statement of financial position for the year. Assets total \$258 million, which includes market-based investments of \$194 million and property and equipment of \$50 million. Please remember that the market-based investment strategy is focused on long-term growth. It follows approved investment policy statements, which are reviewed with the

investment consultant monthly, and the dollars are there to support retirement plan obligations and maintenance and development of our IT systems. As of December 31, 2025, investment performance was positive at 12 percent for the year. The liability section is primarily comprised of retirement plan and lease obligations and totals \$71 million. As per our financial statement footnotes, net assets were restricted by the Board of Directors in 2009, for the protection of retirement plans and obligations to affiliates.

Thank you for your time today. As always, I'm available at your convenience for questions. The slides will be posted as soon as I get them to my very able colleague, Amy Hamernick, who puts them up very quickly for all of you, and I welcome your questions.

The Chair called on Ernest Obubah, from KPMG, for the Teller's Report.

Mr. Obubah: Good morning. I'm Ernest Obubah, KPMG, with the Teller's Report. Total number of ballots cast, 329. Invalid ballots, 2. Majority vote needed for election, 165. Results: Carl Ashby, 93; Karen Burgess, 57; Dominic Carota, 167; Patricia Cruz, 45; Sue Goldberg, 112; Jason Hoke, 181; Laurie Maulucci, 47; Lisa Peterson, 54; Thomas Powers, 113.

The Chair declared that Dominic Palleschi Carota and Jason Hoke were duly elected as members of the Class of 2030.

The Chair announced that there would be a second ballot to fill one vacancy for the Class of 2030.

(Recess for voting.)

(Session resumed.)

The Chair called on the Executive Secretary to read the proposed amendment to Chapter 3, Section 12 of the *Rules Applying to Dog Shows*.

Ms. Goffe: This amendment is to **Chapter 3, Section 12** of the *Rules Applying to Dog Shows*, which codifies the clarification to the rule adopted by the Board at its May 2025 meeting, that a competitive non-regular class may not be offered by an event committee for which castration or spaying is a condition of the class.

This amendment was proposed by the Delegate Dog Show Rules Committee and brought forward with the approval of the AKC Board of Directors.

It will be published in two issues of the *AKC Gazette* and you will be asked to vote on it at the June 2026 meeting. The full text is on the worksheet previously emailed.

There were no questions or discussion.

The Chair called on Sheila Goffe, Executive Secretary and VP, Government Relations, and Stacey West, Manager, Patriotic Puppy Program, for an update on the Detection Dog Task Force and the Patriotic Puppy Program.

Ms. Goffe spoke as follows:

Good morning again. As many of you know, the story of the Detection Dog Task Force goes back to September 11, 2001, when the world awakened to the threat of global terrorism. Since then, many cities have experienced terrorist attacks and international conflicts have expanded in the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America. As the threats have grown, so has the demand for the single most effective way to detect explosives and prevent attacks, the specially trained detection dog. But there's a problem – America and the world have shortages of high-quality detection dogs. Traditionally, the U.S. Government has procured more than 80 percent of our detection dogs from overseas. Having to compete for dogs on the open market has meant that the U.S. lacks a stable source of detection dogs. We're not able to acquire the best quality dogs, and of those we get, many wash out in training. At the same time, previous U.S. breeding programs have failed due to lack of transparency, lack of incentive for breeders, and intimidating contracting processes.

Several years ago, the TSA reached out to our own Dr. Battaglia and asked for AKC's help in addressing the problem. It makes sense: AKC is a preeminent expert on dogs and breeders. We have some 5,000 clubs with top dog breeders, and we have a history of providing assistance to government and law enforcement programs dating back to World War I. Although many breeds can be trained for detection work, the preferred breeds are sporting dogs and especially Labrador Retrievers, one of the most popular breeds in our registry.

The Board created the AKC Detection Dog Task Force to address the problem. Current members are Dr. Carmen Battaglia, Chris Sweetwood and Ann Wallin. Staff are Doug Ljungren, Stacey West, Melissa Farrell and me. We created a multifaceted program that focuses on three areas. In the area of public policy and advocacy, we've worked to streamline government procurement practices and change federal laws and appropriations to better support detection dogs and their development. We're raising awareness of this issue through media, congressional testimony, the biennial AKC National Detection Dog Conference – which incidentally is in Raleigh this August, and you're all invited to attend – and also crucial breeder outreach and education, including quarterly webinars and hands-on seminars throughout the country, as well as newsletters, best practices, and online educational courses with AKC Canine College and our Patriotic Puppy Program. Our success in these areas is enabling AKC and our participants to play an important role in protecting public safety and national security. It's raising the profile of working dogs and purebred dog breeders and is creating relationships that help protect our breeders and our sports from animal rights and other extreme legislation.

Today, we're pleased to update you on the jewel of this program, the AKC Patriotic Puppy Program, which provides one-on-one assistance to help AKC breeders breed, raise, train, and place dogs for future careers as detection dogs.

I'm pleased to introduce Stacey West, our Patriotic Puppy Program Manager, and also Retriever Executive Field Rep to share the fun, hands-on side of the program, how it fits in with traditional Performance events, and some exciting updates.

(Video Plays.)

Mr. West spoke as follows:

I am in a very unique position at AKC as a former professional retriever trainer, now Executive Field Rep for retriever events, where I get to go watch some of the top performance retrievers in the country, in the world to be honest, and explore how to pull those same genetics with our breeders and produce the dogs that our law enforcement are looking for to keep the country safe. What is Patriotic Puppy? Our goal was to decrease dependency on our foreign suppliers, and to do that we built a network of breeders and trainers and industry leaders with one goal, and that is to produce puppies that can go on to become selected for law enforcement programs. We have a dedicated program manager, but from day one I told Sheila that the only way we would be successful is if this program had to be bigger than me. We developed a group of mentors who are industry leaders, the people I lean on around the country, who want breeders in the program to be successful. We have an active social media group that's a closed group, which promotes peer-to-peer interaction between our breeders and trainers, where there is an opportunity to say, "I think I've got a dog ready, I'm just not real sure where I go next," and that's where those industry leaders act as mentors.

Why Sporting breeds? We saw a transition away from the intimidation factor of a Belgian Malinois or a German Shepherd, to where we wanted people to act normal at these large events. For large venue security, I don't need people avoiding the security dog who's sweeping the group of people, I need them to act normal and only the bad guy to be the one who starts trying to avoid our security. The Labrador or the German Shorthaired Pointer became two breeds in particular that TSA was focused on. But we're AKC, so we don't discriminate against breed. We always have the hard conversation when someone thinks their breed can do it. I just have to convince the law enforcement handler to be willing to take on a new breed that they're not traditionally comfortable with. Program requirements to get involved – we expect the puppy to come out of an AKC registered litter and for that puppy to be AKC registered. We send them a DNA kit at the beginning so we can bank the DNA. We want the DNA of dogs that fail just as much as we want the ones who are successful and go on to be placed. We ask that our participants record and submit training records in specifically designated training areas – you'd be surprised how difficult it is to get folks to submit their training records. Finally, once a month we get together and we have a conversation. It's a chance to bring up program issues, find out who's looking for dogs within the industry, and if you've got a training problem, this is where to get that peer-to-peer interaction and when I can give my input as the subject matter expert.

What started out as a pilot program has grown into a nationwide program. I think we're now in 46 states. This is all subject to the email that comes in once a week of new people that are getting in. The program continues to grow. Graduates by breed, obviously we started

with Labradors, and we get a big push for our law enforcement folks. We're heavy on the Labradors, but as you can see, when that first Chesapeake got selected, it looked like a unicorn had gone into the kennel. Everybody came to see the dog, because it's not a traditional breed. We've continued to add new breeds almost yearly. One of the most common questions is whether males or females are selected more. There's really no preference. I have a couple of breeders who like training the males better, and so their kennel gets a little skewed toward males. If you know anything about the Field Trial Labrador lines, it doesn't surprise you that we get more black Labradors being selected than we do other colors.

TSA is the one who got us into this, but one of the biggest things that I brought in when I came on board in 2020, was to open this up to local and state law enforcement. I had a trainer from the state of Maine ask, "Why don't I get first choice? Why do you have to go to TSA first before I can look at your dogs?" Once we expanded to not only TSA but all federal agencies as well as local and state law enforcement, the program took off. You can see where the numbers are headed, 222. I always laugh that every time I put a total number up here, it's wrong. Yesterday on the flight over here, I got an update, four more dogs have been placed and two are headed to the Pentagon. Some weeks we have new dogs placed almost daily. I mentioned the mentor program. These are folks that contribute not only to interaction with our participants, but they support everything we do. They present at our conference; they participate in our webinars. When I have an issue, they're my go-to. They're my sounding board on the technical side of things.

Lessons learned, breeders aren't always trainers. One of the things we talk about with our hands-on events are adding tools to your toolbox. You don't have to be a great dog trainer to get involved with Patriotic Puppy. You just have to be willing to learn and add a new tool to your toolbox. Note-taking is a hard habit to start. Once I started getting our participants to advocate for how they're using their notes in training the next group of dogs, I knew we were turning the corner. Because they can now say, "I was horrible at it, but once I started using it, it was easier to decide when I needed to stop, wash out a dog and find him a new job." Mentorship is a necessity. I can't do this by myself. We have people all over the country, and bringing those mentors in was critical. Finally, right dog, right job. The hardest thing some of our participants had to learn was no means not today. It means this agency didn't want your dog, but two weeks later, that dog could have a job. Those lessons were difficult at times to be involved with. Thank you. If you've got any questions, I'll be happy to answer.

The Chair recognized Joan Savage, Delegate from the Portland Kennel Club, who spoke as follows:

How old do you take these puppies? How long do the breeders have to hold on to them?

Mr. West: Every situation is different. We have had some breeders that have started the training process and found that career for the dog as early as five months of age. We have a dog at Cornell University that they wanted the dog to grow up on campus, so they specifically said five to seven months, German Shorthaired Pointer female. There were three in the program at the time, so they selected the one that fit their needs. Traditionally, the federal

contracts, they won't look at a dog until they're one year of age. The 10–12-month age is where most of our dogs get evaluated.

The Chair recognized Nancy Shaw, Delegate from the San Antonio Kennel Club, who spoke as follows:

Is the DNA testing to make sure it's purebred, or are there things that you've noticed in DNA that make better dogs?

Mr. West: It's to bank that DNA so that once we have enough power to start looking at markers that predict that dog's success or failure for that matter. Right now, that DNA is being collected purely as an opportunity to collect data for the future, to improve our breeding.

The Chair called on Ashley Jacot, Vice President of Education, to talk about upcoming projects from AKC Education.

Ms. Jacot spoke as follows:

Thank you. Today I'm going to share two upcoming projects from AKC Education. The first program is AKC Family Pack Fundamentals. This program focuses on helping families navigate one of the most important transitions in dog ownership, life with children. For many households, bringing home a baby, having grandchildren visit, raising young children alongside the dog can be incredibly rewarding. But it can also introduce new risks if families aren't properly prepared. Our goal with this program is simple but powerful. We want to help families create safer homes, stronger bonds, and positive lifelong relationships between dogs and children. Through education and practical tools, we can give families the knowledge they need to prevent problems before they happen. To understand why this initiative matters, it's important to look at the data. Each year in the United States, there are approximately 4.5 million dog bites. Of those incidents, about 800,000 require medical treatment. Even more concerning is about half of dog-bite victims are children. Children between five and nine years old have the highest injury rates, and younger children under five are most likely to suffer bites to the face, head, and neck because they're physically closer to a dog's level. Young children are curious, energetic, and impulsive. They move quickly, make unpredictable noises, and often don't understand boundaries. When those behaviors meet a dog that may be stressed or confused, the risk increases significantly. This highlights a critical need for education and prevention. One of the most important points to understand is that most dog bites involving children actually happen at home. They typically involve a familiar dog, not a stray or an unknown animal. That means this isn't primarily a problem of dangerous dogs or dangerous breeds. Instead, it's about family dynamics, supervision, and communication. Dogs thrive on routine and predictability, but family life changes frequently. A new baby arrives. A toddler begins crawling. Grandchildren visit more often. Suddenly, the dog's environment becomes louder, busier, and far less predictable. Most incidents happen because signals were missed or structure wasn't clear, and that's exactly where education can make the big difference.

Family Pack Fundamentals was designed to fill that education gap. It's a multi-course digital learning series hosted within AKC Canine College. The program teaches families how to read dog body language, structure their home environment, and practice proactive supervision. We guide families through the different phases of raising children with dogs, from pregnancy through preschool years. Importantly, the program is not fear-based. Instead, it focuses on prevention and preparation. Our goal is to give families practical, repeatable tools that reduce risk and help create a calm, structured environment where both dogs and children can thrive. The program begins with a three foundational course that applies to every dog-owning household. The first course is Understanding Your Dog. This teaches families how to recognize body language, stress signals, and early warning signs. The second course is Setting Your Dog Up for Success. Here, we help families evaluate their home layout and establish things like relaxation zones and clear boundaries. The third course is Guiding Everyday Interactions. This focuses on supervision levels and how to respond to situations in real time. Those foundational skills apply to every breed, every size dog, and every type of household. They form the base knowledge families need before addressing specific life stages. After the foundational course, the program expands to meet families where they are in their journey. We're developing stage-specific courses for several life stages. Expectant parents, families with a newborn, families with crawling babies and toddlers, families with preschool-aged children. Each stage presents unique challenges. For example, preparing a dog for a newborn is very different than managing a household with an active toddler. Rather than offering generic advice, these courses provide targeted strategies tailored to each developmental stage. This makes the program much more practical and relevant for real families. What really sets this program apart is that it's designed to be interactive and actionable. Families won't just watch videos or read information. They'll actively engage with the material through tools like interactive planning snapshots, downloadable playbooks, and real-world scenarios. We also include demonstration videos that show essential training cues such as leave it, drop it, place, and out. These tools help families turn knowledge into practical action plans for their homes.

This approach moves AKC Education from simple awareness to real-world application. Family Pack Fundamentals was designed around real family scenarios. For example, dog owners expecting a baby, grandparents who frequently host grandchildren, families managing multiple dogs and multiple children, urban households teaching children safe interactions in public spaces. We also consider blended families, newly adopted dogs, and households where children host frequent play dates. By addressing these real-life situations, AKC Canine College can reach families earlier in their dog ownership journey and support them with credible, trusted education.

Beyond the educational benefits, this initiative also supports AKC strategically. First, it positions AKC as the trusted authority in dog child safety. Second, it expands AKC's digital education ecosystem through scalable online learning. Third, it allows us to build relationships with young families earlier, creating opportunities for long-term engagement. It also helps counter misinformation that often spreads through social media or unverified training sources. Ultimately, this program strengthens AKC's leadership role in responsible dog ownership

while protecting both children and dogs. This video provides a preview of the Family Pack Fundamental program and highlights the practical tools that families will receive. (Video Plays.)

Now I'd like to shift gears slightly and talk about another exciting project from the AKC Public Education team. This project focuses on developing a children's book that celebrates the human-canine bond while introducing families to AKC. Like Family Pack Fundamentals, this initiative supports our broader goal of education and engagement with families. The idea for this book came from a simple observation. When we search for children's books that promote literacy while highlighting the relationship between people and dogs, we found the options were surprisingly limited. Many dog-themed books are purely fictional or focus on only a few well-known breeds. Very few books introduce children to the diversity of dog breeds or to the activities and sports that dogs participate in. We saw an opportunity to create a book that could both educate and inspire young readers.

Once the idea was established, our team began learning more about the process of writing and publishing a children's book. We enrolled in courses to understand the steps involved, including outlining, drafting, editing, and publishing. The manuscript went through multiple revisions. Feedback came from educators, families with children, AKC subject matter experts, and team members within public education. One of the biggest challenges at this stage was finding an illustrator with experience drawing dogs accurately. Once we selected an illustrator, the collaboration process began with developing the book's characters. This stage helped us align on artistic style while ensuring the illustrations would remain both child-friendly and accurate to the breed. Balancing those two goals was extremely important because we the illustrations to reflect the breed standard while still appealing to young readers.

Next, we work with the illustrator to determine the layout of each page. We discussed text placement, visual storytelling, and specific details that should appear in the illustrations. The illustrator then created thumbnail sketches for each page. These small sketches gave us an early preview of how the story would visually unfold. After thumbnails were approved, the illustrator created rough versions of the full interior pages. Each illustration went through multiple rounds of revisions. The Public Education team and AKC staff reviewed every stage and provided detailed feedback. Additional team members and subject matter experts also contributed feedback to ensure accuracy and clarity. One of the most exciting stages was adding color to the illustrations. Our illustrator used a detailed process that begins with drawing the artwork, painting it with watercolor, and then transferring it digitally to refine the final image. Because the process is so detailed, providing clear and thorough feedback at this stage was essential. One of the biggest challenges was ensuring the sports and breeds were represented accurately while still being easy for children to understand. Our illustrator had limited background in dog sports, so we needed to provide reference images and detailed explanations. In some cases, entire pages had to be redesigned. For example, the dog show illustration was scrapped and redone to ensure the details were clearer and easier for readers

to recognize. The back of the book will include educational pages featuring real images of dog breeds and AKC Sports. These pages will also include information about the AKC and links to learn more.

This book helps achieve several goals. It introduces families to the AKC brand. It highlights lesser-known breeds and dog sports. It provides educational content for families and educators. It also supports programs like Bailey's Book Club, where books can be distributed to schools nationwide. We anticipate the book will be completed by the second quarter of this year. Once published, it will be available through several channels, including the AKC Shop, the traveling AKC Booth, Amazon, and major AKC events. In addition, copies will be donated to Title 1 schools through the Bailey's Book Club program. This project helps expand AKC's educational reach while introducing new families and children to the world of dogs in the AKC community. You can pick up a flyer about this book on the check-in table.

Education has long been a part of the AKC mission, but 2026 marks a milestone year. This year is the 10-year anniversary of the AKC Education Department, and I'm proud of the progress our team has made building programs that serve the entire AKC community. You can scan the QR code to visit our website, and you can also contact me anytime. Thank you for your continued support.

The Chair called on Ernest Obubah, from KPMG, for the second Teller's Report.

Mr. Obubah: Here's the report from the second ballot.

Total number of ballots cast, 332. Invalid ballots, 9. Majority vote needed for election, 167. Results: Carl Ashby, 49; Karen Burgess, 26; Patricia Cruz, 8; Sue Goldberg, 100; Laurie Maulucci, 16; Lisa Peterson, 14; Thomas Powers, 110.

The Chair announced that as no candidate received a majority vote, there would be a third ballot to elect one candidate to the Class of 2030.

Laurie Maulucci, Delegate from the South Windsor Kennel Club, withdrew her name from the ballot.

Patricia Cruz, Delegate from the Heart of the Plains Kennel Club, withdrew her name from the ballot.

Karen Burgess, Delegate from the Greater Clark County Kennel Club, withdrew her name from the ballot.

Lisa Peterson, Delegate from the Norwegian Elkhound Association of America, withdrew her name from the ballot.

(Recess for voting.)

(Session resumed.)

The Chair called on Gail LaBerge, Delegate from the Atlanta Obedience Club, to provide an update on the AKC PAC.

Ms. LaBerge spoke as follows:

Good morning, everyone. Normally, I come up and I ask you for money. Well, of course, I'm asking for money. But today, I want to share a story that happened in the past week to show what your PAC money is doing and how giving local PAC money really makes a difference. A week ago, Friday night, after business hours, I received a notification from the Georgia State Senate that we had a dog bill coming up on Monday morning in committee. I read the bill, and it's an anti-breeder bill, similar to others we've been seeing across the country. So, I notified Sheila Goffe and her staff, and then I called Ronnie Gaskins, Chairman of Georgia Hunting & Fishing. He also happens to be a County Commissioner in South Georgia. When Ronnie decided to run seven years ago for County Commissioner, the AKC PAC supported his campaign. He said to me, "There's three people running. It's an open seat. I expect a runoff." But he won outright, and he told me that AKC PAC support money allowed his campaign to do some that made the difference in his election. All these years later, he lets me know the senator sponsoring this bill is his senator, blind copies me on an email that I will tell you, it was apparent he knew this guy personally because I'd never said what he said to him in an email! By Saturday AKC has an alert out, Ronnie Gaskins has been in touch with the AG Commissioner, who also wasn't happy about the last-minute surprise, and Georgia Canine Coalition and AKC supporters are blowing up the sponsor's email box. One of the Georgia Canine Coalition members happens to be a neighbor of a very influential committee member, a senator. She goes down the road and has a chat with him. He also calls the sponsor. That little bit of money that we gave years ago went a long way in helping us!

I also have to share this. Ronnie told me that when he called the senator, he told him, Georgia Hunting & Fishing Federation will not support this, and they have a large group in his area. Nor will the Georgia Canine Coalition, and I am told that the American Kennel Club will oppose this bill as written. And the senator's words were, "Don't bring AKC down here on me." By Sunday evening, the bill no longer had a hearing scheduled for Monday morning, which meant he did not get it passed before the session deadline. It was a great victory, and I believe it's a victory for the AKC PAC. When you give, it does open the door for the AKC GR team and dog owners everywhere. Please think about what it can do for you and your community and your state. And remember, you have the right when you donate to also recommend individuals that you want us to consider giving a PAC donation to. We're happy to give that money away because that's the whole idea.

Finally, we're excited to announce that this year's sweepstakes is a trip to Costa Rica for a week and a \$1,000 gift card to pay for your airfare. We hope you'll make a contribution and encourage all your club members to do the same! Now is a great time to give.

The Chair informed the Delegates that the Tuesday, June 9, 2026, Delegate Meeting will be held at the Doubletree Newark Airport Hotel. Detailed information will be emailed as soon as it becomes available.

The following Delegates spoke during New Business:

Kevin Dryman, Delegate from the Skokie Valley Kennel Club, praised the Patriotic Puppy Program, emphasizing the need for first responders to have adequate resources. He called attention to the significant decrease in service dog availability, leading to wait times of over five years due to volunteer shortages, high costs and funding problems, training limitations, industry regulation gaps, and fraudulent dogs. He inquired about the AKC Service Dog Pass website, which currently shows no available services and questioned AKC's plans to increase volunteer support for service dogs, due to the exigency of combat veterans.

In response, Ms. Goffe explained that the AKC Service Dog Pass program was currently on hiatus. However, the AKC is actively promoting the breeding of service dogs, as demonstrated by the Patriotic Puppy Program. She directed Mr. Dryman to the AKCGR website at akcgr.org for more information on service dogs and also invited him to speak with her on the topic.

Connie Butherus, Delegate from the Afghan Hound Club of America, reported for the Parent Clubs Committee on the Pat Laurans Difference Maker Awards for the quarter. The four honorees were Wayne Ferguson, David Frei, Bill and Tina Truesdale.

Ann Wallin, Delegate from the Atlanta Kennel Club, spoke as a member of the Board of Directors of AKC Reunite to provide an update on their charitable giving programs thus far in 2026:

- AKC Reunite Pet Disaster Relief Trailers: 120 donated to date. 8 trailers in production.
- AKC Reunite K-9 Cop Grant Program: 964 grants have been awarded to date, representing over \$7 million in total grants; 75 of 80 have already been approved for 2026.
- Emergency Disaster Grants: 1 grant has been awarded so far in 2026, totaling \$2,500.
- Search and Rescue Grants: 6 grants have been awarded so far in 2026, totaling over \$15,000

Monica Stoner, Delegate from the Saluki Club of America and Editor of *Perspectives*, expressed gratitude to the Delegates who contributed photos and articles for the March issue. She encouraged everyone to read it, noting that the feature on low entry breeds was a highlight. The next photo theme has yet to be determined. She stated that submissions on any writing topic are welcome and offered assistance in refining them if needed.

Sandra Rolenaitis, Delegate from the Harrisburg Kennel Club, shared that as Shiba Inu breeders, she and her husband have donated \$105,000 over the last 11 years to East Coast Shiba Inu rescues and a glaucoma DNA marker research trial. When placing puppies, they

ask buyers to donate \$20 to the National Rescue, SIRRA, a 501(c)(3) organization, which allows them to get a tax deduction. Donations are tracked, and after their Christmas fund drive, the collected funds are sent to SIRRA to distribute to reputable Shiba rescues. This year, they have raised \$15,000, including a \$6,000 donation to Michigan State for the glaucoma trial.

Staying connected with puppy owners allows them to make a positive impact on their breed and give back to the dog community.

Hearing no further business, the Chair advised the Delegates that the meeting would recess while the votes were being counted for the third ballot.

(Recess.)

(Session resumed.)

The Chair called on Ernest Obubah, from KPMG, for the third Teller's Report.

Mr. Obubah: Here's the report from the third ballot.

Total number of ballots cast, 325. Invalid ballots, 1. Majority vote needed for election, 163.

Results: Carl Ashby, 45; Sue Goldberg, 141; Thomas Powers, 138.

The Chair announced that as no candidate received a majority vote, there would be a fourth ballot to elect one candidate to the Class of 2030.

The Chair advised the Delegates that the meeting would recess while the votes were being counted for the fourth ballot.

(Recess.)

(Session resumed.)

The Chair called on Ernest Obubah, from KPMG, for the fourth Teller's Report.

Mr. Obubah: Here's the report from the fourth ballot.

Total number of ballots cast, 306. Invalid ballots, 0. Majority vote needed for election, 153.

Results: Carl Ashby, 23; Sue Goldberg, 149; Thomas Powers, 134.

The Chair announced that as no candidate received a majority vote, there would be a fifth ballot to elect one candidate to the Class of 2030.

Carl Ashby, Delegate from the United States Kerry Blue Terrier Club, withdrew his name from the ballot.

(Recess for voting.)

(Session resumed.)

The Chair advised the Delegates that the meeting would recess while the votes were being counted for the fifth ballot.

(Recess.)

(Session resumed.)

The Chair called on Ernest Obubah, from KPMG, for the fifth Teller's Report.

Mr. Obubah: Here's the report from the fifth and final ballot.

Total votes cast, 307. Number of invalid ballots, 1. Majority needed, 154.

Results: Sue Goldberg, 162. Thomas Powers, 144.

The Chair declared that Sue Goldberg was duly elected as a member of the Class of 2030.

Board members were instructed to go to the Salem/Warren room.

The Chair thanked the Board members whose terms ended, Chris Sweetwood, Red Tatro, and Ann Wallin, for their service over the last eight years.

The Chair adjourned the meeting. (*One sharp rap of the gavel.*)

(Proceedings concluded at 12:19 p.m. ET.)

The opinions expressed by the speakers may not necessarily reflect those of The American Kennel Club.