

Parent Club Committee Meeting Dec. 13, 2019

## Legislative Update

Congress, five states , and the District of Columbia are currently in session. 17 States are accepting pre-filed bills for 2020. AKC Government Relations is currently tracking more than 2,350 bills on the federal, state, and local levels. An overview of current issues nationally will be available at the GR/PAC table Friday.

We've issued 152 legislative alerts in 2019, and provided comments and/or oral and written testimony on more than 100 pieces of canine legislation.

As is typical for this time of year, we are seeing more action at local ( county, city municipal) level than state and federal levels right now.

Many bills fall into multiple categories, however the top issues we are seeing at the state and local level right now (in order) are:

Cruelty

Working Dogs ( including service and MWDs)

Other

Veterinary

Animal Control

Retail Pet Sales

Parent clubs are in a unique situation because they have members across the country. Whenever parent clubs learn of a legislative issue, they are always welcome to reach out directly to the GR team [doglaw@akc.org](mailto:doglaw@akc.org) or visit the parent club delegates facebook page.

They may also be interested in knowing which staff person on the GR team is handling an issue. Here is a map of the regions of GR team members. This is also available online at the GR Legislative Action Center [www.akcgr.org](http://www.akcgr.org), and at the GR booth outside the delegates meeting tomorrow. This map will be updated in January 2020.

Every member of the AKC GR team (10 total) is involved in legislative analysis and comment. We are broken down geographically into 5 general regions, 3 of which (we are in the process of hiring a 4th) have staff in the field to work with you on issues in your state and community. GR field staff, as well as NC staff are available to speak to your clubs, provide testimony, advocacy training, assist with outreach, and help alert you to and assist in your response to issues of concern in your area. Our regional staff are also registered as lobbyists in key states in their regions.

Our federal lobbyist of more than 10 years (Mike Williams) is working on issues related to pet imports, Breeder Licensing, the Detection Dog Shortage, and other issues that impact us at the federal level. Federal issues are crucial because of their capacity to quickly impact the largest number of dog owners across the country.

We also have lobbyists (both staff and contract) in key states. The state where we register lobbyists varies from year to year depending on activity level, availability and specific issues. We currently have lobbyists registered in AL, CA, CT, KY, MD, NJ, NC, NH, OH, PA, RI, VA

**Federal Issues:** We are focusing on 4 major areas (details are available at the GR table Friday and at the show Sat -Sun.) :

Imports of Unhealthy Dogs. More than 1 million dogs are being imported into the US on an annual basis. We believe the vast majority of these dogs are intended for transfer or resale in retail rescue or other retail markets. The vast majority of these dogs are entering with minimal health checks, and in many cases invalid health certificates. Combined with the “adopt don’t shop” mantra, many of these animals not only undermine demand for well-bred purebred dogs, they pose an imminent and significant health threat to humans, pets and livestock. AKC is working together with NAIA on federal legislation to require that dogs entering the US for transfer (adoption, resale, etc.) have valid veterinary certificates from a competent veterinary authority that can be checked when they enter the US. Importers that attempt to import dogs that do not meet health standards would be required to return them to the country of origin.

Federal Breeder Licensing – HR 3164, the House-passed FY 2020 Agricultural Appropriations bill would require USDA APHIS to include personally identifiable information such as residential addresses and “animal inventories” in an online, publicly-searchable database of USDA licensed dog breeders. AKC believes adding personal information is not necessary for assuring animal welfare. Moreover, we believe it creates a virtual “shopping list” for animal rights activists and pet thieves who wish to target individual breeders. The measure would not only hurt responsible breeders but would likely also dampen efforts to improve licensing compliance and the welfare oversight of animals in licensed facilities. A similar measure failed in the Senate version of this bill, but it could come back during conference when the two versions are reconciled. AKC urges everyone to contact members of the House Appropriations Committee to oppose advancing this measure. More information will be available at the GR table.

Service Dog Issues - AKC is extremely concerned about increasing reports detailing fraudulent misrepresentation of pets as service dogs in order to obtain accommodations reserved for the disabled, and dangerous incidents related to poorly-trained service dogs. The AKC strongly condemns characterizing dogs as service animals when they are not or attempting to benefit from a dog’s service dog status when the individual using the dog is not a person with a disability.

Misrepresentation of a service dog harms disabled individuals, the credibility of working dogs, and creates havoc and a health and safety hazard for the public. AKC Government Relations has tracked

approximately 300 bills related to service dogs this year, with some specifically regarding the misuse or misrepresentation of a pet dog as a service dog.

AKC is proud to be working with service dog users, trainers, access providers and leading industry partners who, as part of the *American Service Dog Access Coalition (ASDAC)*, a charitable 501 (c)3 organization, are creating a high quality, voluntary credential to improve access for service dog teams that meet verified high standards. The development of this program is ongoing. A presentation on it was made at the June delegates legislative caucus, and more information will be available at the GR booth at the delegates meeting and at the show.

**Airlines issues** – While these issues may not be strictly legislative or regulatory issues, AKC GR is also working to address issues related to airline bans on dogs in cargo based on size and breed.

**AKC PAC** – Next year is a major election year with many state and local legislators, all members of Congress, and many US Senators facing elections.

Some of the biggest policy challenges we face are educating legislators about the difference between animal welfare and agenda-driven animal rights, the value of preserving our breeds and our sport, their constituents who are club members and dog enthusiasts, and ensuring that they see us (clubs, responsible dog breeders, AKC) as their first and best source of information.

We work directly with legislators and with clubs to raise this profile in communities around the country so that elected representatives know who we are and support our rights. One of the best tools we have for supplementing these efforts is the **AKC PAC. PAC contributions to key legislators provide opportunities for individual access to lawmakers, campaign support for legislators who support us, and give us the chance for our voices to be heard.** Some of our most successful legislative initiatives have been possible because of the relationships that started from the access we achieved through a PAC donation.

However, the AKC PAC can only be funded by individual donations from club members. We need your help. I urge every single delegate to donate at least the cost of a dog show entry toward this effort. Surely, preserving the dignity and future of dogs and our sport is worth this much. The PAC is repeating its popular caricature fundraiser again this year. Get a caricature of you and your dog for a donation of \$50 to the PAC. Artist Rafael Diez will be sketching caricatures Friday, Sat and Sunday afternoons. Sign up for at the GR table Fri or at the AKC GR booth at the show (#105). (See attached flyer for details)