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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY REVIEW COMMISSION



REPLY TO:

Harrisburg

Senate of Pennsylvania

February 5, 2007

COPY

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
 225 Capitol Building
 Harrisburg PA 17120

Re: Dog Law

Dear Governor Rendell:

Nearly a year ago, I wrote to you regarding your pledge to strengthen the State's Dog Law. Since that time, much has been accomplished – particularly in the area of the tragic "puppy mill" dilemma – by reorganizing the Dog Law Advisory Board and naming Jessie Smith as Special Deputy Secretary for Dog Law Enforcement and Jeffrey Paladina as Special Prosecutor. As you yourself have stated however, this represents only the beginning of efforts to mandate better treatment of dogs in our Commonwealth. I am writing today to reiterate my concerns about two grave matters that I feel merit serious consideration in the course of our work together to better protect our animals and our constituency.

In March of 2006, I outlined the challenges faced by the non-profit Humane Society of Greene County, a rural, full-service, open access shelter located in Waynesburg. One of the issues discussed at that time was the fact that the Commonwealth falls woefully short in the amount of reimbursement for each stray dog left in the shelter's care. In 2006, Greene County accepted 168 from the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement's Dog Warden and 150 from citizens at an estimated average cost of \$175 to house each stray for a total of \$ 55,650 - \$39,290 more than the Commonwealth's total compensation of \$16,360 (including the Dog Control Facility Grant) for that year alone! Depending upon the size and temperament of the animal, I am advised that it can cost as high as \$15 to euthanize one dog – nearly as much as the \$20 the Department of Agriculture reimburses per animal.

Greene County, unlike some shelters who no longer accept animals from the Dog Warden because of the financial strain that it places upon them, has not severed its relationship with the State despite the fact that as a non-profit organization in a small rural area with no significant corporate base, they must struggle to raise funds in order to keep their doors open on a reserve of two months of operating funds. I realize that the amount of reimbursement per animal has doubled under your administration; however, I respectfully request that this issue be revisited and seriously revised.

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
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The second matter that must be carefully reexamined is particularly relevant to the key components of your legislative proposal as it relates to the successful enforcement of the criminal penalties of the Dog Law and cruelty statutes – that being the role of the Humane Police Officer. As I have stated previously, the Humane Society of Greene County must rely upon donations and fundraising to operate – including paying all of the costs associated with investigating and prosecuting animal abuse. One Officer working a 20-hour week requires that the organization raise an estimated \$20,000 each year. I know of no other law enforcement agency that must solicit donations to enforce state law. In 2006, Greene County's Humane Police Officers answered 239 animal abuse calls – an increase of 52% from 2005! The desperately needed crackdown on conditions in kennels will bring with it unanticipated problems: Where will these unfortunate animals be sent? Who will absorb the cost of their care? How will already financially strapped shelters like Greene's afford the added expense?

Your appointments to the new Dog Law Advisory Board, the creation of the extra positions in the Bureau, and our work together to revamp the Dog Law and related regulations are all positive steps in the right direction. However, as I am certain you will agree, we must prepare not only to strengthen the sanctions for abuse on paper but also to responsibly fund those non-governmental entities across the Commonwealth, like the Humane Society of Greene County, who are at the heart of investigating reports of abuse and prosecuting offenders.

Thank you in advance for your time and prompt attention to this matter of mutual concern. I anxiously await any suggestions that you may have regarding this important issue.

With kindest regards,



J. BARRY STOUT
State Senator

CC: Dennis C. Wolff, Secretary of Agriculture
H. William DeWeese, Minority Leader, 50th Legislative District
Steve Crawford, Secretary of Legislative Affairs
John Estey, Chief of Staff
Mary Bender, Director of Bureau of Dog Law Protection
Jessie Smith, Special Deputy Secretary for Dog Law Enforcement
Jeffrey Paladina, Special Prosecutor for Dog Law Enforcement
Doug Furness, Legislative Liaison
Humane Society of Greene County Board of Directors