

SENATOR FOR A DAY MOCK LEGISLATION

Senate Bill 1 – Prohibiting the Operation of Puppy Mills in Pennsylvania

[Animal rights advocates call on state lawmakers to stop pet mill sales | The Pennsylvania Independent](#)

By: Anna Gustafson May 1, 2024

Advocates gathered at the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg on April 29 and urged lawmakers to pass legislation that would protect dogs, cats and other animals in the commonwealth.

Those attending the Humane Lobby Day, which is annually organized by the Humane Society of the United States and the Animal Legal Defense Fund, called on legislators to throw their support behind bills that would end live pigeon shoots, ban the sale of dogs from puppy mills, prohibit cat declawing, limit the public's interaction with wildlife, and restrict the breeding of dogs for research.

"For me, today, Humane Lobby Day, I really believe is the most important animal advocacy event every year," Kristen Tullo, the Pennsylvania state director of the Humane Society of the United States, said of the gathering that drew about 130 advocates from across the state to the capitol.

Banning live pigeon shoots

Tullo said one of the highlights of the day was when advocates gathered to watch members of the state House Judiciary Committee [greenlight House Bill 2139](#), which would prohibit live pigeon shoots in Pennsylvania. The bill now goes to the full House for consideration. The pigeon events involve people shooting the birds at close range; the pigeons involved have typically been raised in captivity specifically for these contests.

According to a [press release](#) from the Pennsylvania House Democratic Caucus, there is at least one regularly scheduled annual live pigeon shoot in Pennsylvania, held in Bucks County.

State Rep. Perry Warren, a Democrat who represents a portion of Bucks County, sponsored the legislation and noted that Pennsylvania has previously outlawed other forms of animal cruelty.

"Dog fighting, cock fighting and greyhound racing have already been prohibited in Pennsylvania," Warren [said](#) in a press release. "In 2017 even possessing the implements to raise or train an animal for death in the name of gambling became illegal. Yet, pigeon shoots are presently exempted from Pennsylvania's animal cruelty law."

Humane pet stores

Advocates also urged lawmakers to pass [House Bill 846](#), known as Victoria's Law, which would ban pet stores from selling dogs, cats and rabbits from facilities known as pet mills.

[Pet mills](#) are breeding facilities that unethically mass-produce animals for profit; animals in these facilities face significant inhumane treatment and often untreated [health problems](#) due in part to severely overcrowded conditions.

“This is really moving the pet store into a humane direction and promoting shelter rescues and responsible breeders,” Tullo said. “I think a lot of times people think that this is just shutting down pet stores, and that is not the intent of the bill.”

The legislation, [sponsored](#) by Democratic Rep. Jeanne McNeill, remains in committee.

Limiting public contact with wildlife

The Pennsylvania Game Commission in April 2023 [relaxed rules on public contact](#) with wildlife, a move that has received widespread condemnation from animal rights advocates and some lawmakers who want to see the decision reversed due to concerns about public safety and animal welfare.

Commissioners [voted 6-3](#) to permit wild animal exhibitors, such as petting zoos and fairs, to [sell public contact experiences](#) with wildlife, including kangaroos, hippos and rhinos.

After the rules were relaxed, a Lake Tobias Wildlife Park employee was [gored](#) in the leg by a bison while she was giving a public tour, and a llama [died](#) after being run over by a tour bus.

Rep. Joe Hohenstein sponsored [House Bill 1451](#), which would prevent the public from feeding or having direct physical contact with wildlife without a barrier between the person and the animal.

The Democratic-led House [passed](#) that bill in November. It now remains in committee in the Senate.

Cat declawing

Legislation now before lawmakers, House Bill [508](#) and Senate Bill [1178](#), would prohibit cat declawing, an elective procedure that animal rights advocates [explain](#) is the amputation of a cat’s claws along with part of the bone of each toe, a procedure called inhumane and traumatic by the Human Society of the United States and the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association, [among other groups](#). It can [cause](#) chronic pain, nerve and tissue damage, bone spurs, and other health problems.

“That bill is great because the time has really come on that issue,” Tullo said.

[At least 42 countries](#) have banned cat declawing. In the United States, New York was the first state to outlaw declawing in 2018, and Maryland was the second in 2022. A number of U.S. cities, including [Pittsburgh and Allentown](#), have banned the practice.

Restricting the breeding of dogs for research

Advocates hope state lawmakers will pass a package of legislation known as the Beagle Freedom Bills, which includes House Bills [1318, 1319, and 1320](#) and Senate Bills [701, 702 and 703](#).

The legislation would restrict the breeding of dogs for research and increase investments in nonanimal research methods.

[According](#) to the Humane Society, about 44,000 dogs were used in experiments each year for the past three years in the United States. Dogs are used to test such substances as pharmaceuticals and pesticides — including rat poison and weed killer — and medical devices and the majority of

those dogs are ultimately killed so scientists can examine their tissues and organs. Dogs are also used in a wide range of biomedical experiments, including neurological and respiratory testing. In some cases, they can be bred to have fatal diseases.

There are alternatives to using animals for testing, and the National Institutes of Health [notes](#) that it is continuing to develop other options, including using cells and tissues in test tubes, stem cell research, 3D tissue culture, computational and mathematical models, and noninvasive diagnostic imaging.