

Proponent Testimony for SB 205

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak out in support of Senate Bill 205 and increasing the penalty for torture of companion animals. I represent the Friends of the Highland County Dog Pound, a 501(c)(3) group that works with the Pound to help needy dogs in our county. I am speaking on behalf of the dogs we have helped, the dogs we have lost and the dogs that broke our hearts in the aftermath of pain and violence suffered at the hands of malevolent monsters.

Nothing will destroy faith in your fellow man like working with companion animals that have been beaten, burned, starved, taped, tied, flogged, shot, or thrown out like garbage by individuals who should have been responsible for their welfare. Nothing will test your faith in God like seeing an arrow sticking out of a dog's eye, knowing someone's aim was deliberate. And nothing creates fury and frustration like knowing these perpetrators will never answer for their unforgivable actions.

In addition to clarifying what constitutes extreme cruelty towards companion animals and giving law enforcement some muscle in response to it, Senate Bill 205 provides at least some penalty, some real retribution in response to unspeakable cruelty.

It is essential legislation - for the kitten drop-kicked in the face like a foot ball, for the coon hound confined for life to his 12" x15" cage, for the thirty Pointers so starved they ultimately ate one of their own, for all the dogs so traumatized by their contact with people, they are too terrified to stand or move.

And, it is essential legislation for the decent human beings in our state who love their animals and cherish the special bond that has existed between us for centuries. We count on our companion animals for love, loyalty and laughter, but they count on us for everything. Everything. It is not enough to cry when we see their terrible wounds or bury them. If we cannot protect our companion animals from the horror of human behavior, we can at least enact legislation to penalize it.

The animal lovers and Friends of the Highland County Dog Pound support increased penalties for predatory individuals who have abandoned any claim to humanity by their cruelty. We support giving law enforcement and legal agents the mandate for rigorous prosecution of these individuals. We support SB 205, a bill that bites back. We hope you will, too.

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