

Thank you, Chairman Tim Shaffer, Vice Chair Stephen A. Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Teresa Fedor, and committee, for giving me the opportunity today to address you on the importance of SB 164.

My name is Michael Altieri, I have been employed with the Warren Police Department since June 19, 2013. During my service with the Warren Police Department, I have been assigned to the Emergency Services Division, Street Crimes Unit, the Criminal Investigations Division, and my most current assignment, the Criminal Intelligence Unit.

I have also been a member with the Warren Police Department's Tactical Entry Team. As a member of this team, I assisted in executing numerous narcotics search warrants. I would also assist with the search of these residences.

I am also assigned to the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission as an Agent with the Mahoning Valley Human Tracking Task Force since March 1, 2018.

I stand here before you today to give testimony in support of adding a F4 for killing a companion animal. I also support a F5 for anyone who aides or abets in the commission of the F4. Finally, I support classifying both of these felony offenses, along with M1 offenses, as **violent offenses against our companion animals**.

In August of 2018, the Warren Police Department's Facebook page began receiving multiple messages, including photos, regarding a hanging dog that had been skinned from the neck down. After further investigation, it was found that an individual named Cole Winter posted these photos. One post (Exhibit #1) specifically stated:

"Bro my dad did all this but the police wont get his ass like tf and hes done more to different animals but cuz his warrant is in canton for animal cruelty they wont get his ass cuz he lives in warren ohio like wtf bro and for dv wtf."

The graphic photos depicted a blue nose pit-bull hanging on a wall that had been skinned from the neck down. They also show a male subject, later identified as Scott Winter, wearing a white shirt and blue jeans, skinning the animal.

Further into the investigation, it was determined that Cole Winter used to reside in Canton, Ohio with his father, Scott Winter, and Victoria Young along with his younger siblings. Investigators also learned that this incident occurred in Canton, Ohio and that Scott Winter currently had a warrant for his arrest specifically for Animal Cruelty. Ultimately, Scott Winter was arrested for that warrant and was later transported back to Stark County.

Due to the nature of this investigation and jurisdictional issues, the Warren Police Department agreed to assist investigators with Canton Police. The following will outline the Warren Police Department's involvement along with three interviews conducted with Cole Winter and Victoria Young.

July 18, 2018 1448 hours
Warren Police Department
Cole Winter Interview Summary

On July 18, 2019, Cole Winter came to the Warren Police Department and was interviewed. Cole Winter provided information to investigators regarding the brutal killing of a companion animal by Scott Winter.

- Cole stated the companion animal that Scott Winter killed belonged to his cousin.
- Cole stated the companion animal had bit him (Cole) along with Scott's girlfriend, Victoria Young, and another dog residing at the residence.
- Cole stated, Scott picked the dog up by the neck and began choking it until it went unconscious. Cole stated it appeared that the dog would "recover" from the abuse, so Scott began choking the animal until it was dead.
- Cole stated Scott then hung the dog from a post using a rope and left the dog there for approximately three hours.
- Cole stated Scott let the deceased dog hang for approximately three to four days and would occasionally remove skin from the dog's carcass.
- Cole stated after Scott was finished skinning the dog, he burned it in a firepit at the residence in Canton, Ohio.
- Cole stated his younger siblings were inside the house during the killing of the dog.
- Cole stated the children told him they have seen Scott abuse other animals to include skinning a cat.
- Scott stated he did not tell anyone at the time because he believe Scott would "do" something to him.

During this interview, the lead investigator from Canton Police Department was present.

On August 01, 2018, investigators along with uniformed officers went to Scott Winter's residence located in the City of Warren, Trumbull County, Ohio. While at the residence, Scott Winter was arrested on a warrant filed by Canton Police Department. Scott Winter was transported to the Trumbull County Jail by uniformed police officers with the Warren Police Department. Investigators transported Victoria Young to the Warren Police Department after she agreed to make a statement.

August 1, 2018 1138 hours

Warren Police Department

Victoria Young Interview #1 Summary

- Vicky stated she did not see the photos on Facebook but had heard about the incident on the news.
- Victoria was shown a picture of the dog that was skinned, and she stated that it was “disturbing”.
- Victoria stated she was the person in the video that Scott Winter was yelling at. Victoria stated Scott was demonstrating something he heard or saw in “jail”. In the video Scott is heard saying, “I’ll cut your fucking throat.” When asked, Victoria stated that Scott would “not do it”.
- Victoria stated she did not initially know what Scott did to the dog. Victoria stated she learned about it when she arrived home and saw “blood” on the floor.
- Victoria stated she saw the dog laying on the floor in a trash bag.
- Victoria stated she told Scott to “get rid of that dog”.
- Victoria stated she put the dog in the trash.
- Victoria states she attempted to clean the “blood” up so the kids would not see it.
- Victoria stated Scott got the “pit” from a family member.
- In the interview, Victoria kept stating she use to bury her dogs but that it was illegal now. Victoria also asked if it was “legal” to cremate a dog.
- I confronted Victoria about how long the dog was hanging inside the residence. Victoria changed her story and stated it was in a trash bag hanging from the wall. Victoria then changes her story again and says the dog may have been inside the residence for a couple of days because it did start “stinking”.
- Victoria stated she only knew Scott to skin the dog for one day.
- Victoria stated Scott told her he was going to eat the dog.
- Victoria stated the kids asked her what happen to the dog, but she stated she didn’t tell them anything because she didn’t want to know. Victoria admitted that the children saw the blood.
- At the end of the interview, Victoria gave written and verbal consent to search the residence on Palmyra Rd. SW.

August 01, 2018 / 12:17 p.m.

Detectives, along with Victoria Young, arrived back at Scott Winter's residence.

Detectives photographed Scott Winter's residence due to its poor living conditions. **(Exhibit's #3-7)**

The Health Department was also contacted about the current condition of the residence.

Investigator's then checked the outside of the residence, specifically the back yard. It should be mentioned, that when I exited the residence and walked towards the back yard, the smell of something "dead" was immediately apparent. I searched the surrounding wooded areas in search of what was causing the odor but was unable to locate anything.

I returned to the backyard of the residence and noticed the firepit was unusually covered. I removed the debris and observed what appeared to be burnt bones and a skull. **(Exhibits #8-59)**

I asked Victoria Young about the bones I observed in the firepit and she stated they were "steak" or "chicken" bones. I then asked Victoria Young about the skull located in the firepit. Victoria Young stated she knew nothing about the skull.

I then had Victoria Young walk over to the firepit so she could see the bones and skull I was asking about. Victoria Young stated the remnants may be that of a raccoon. Victoria Young then stated, without being prompted, that it was not her dog. Victoria Young stated that her dog had ran away. I asked Victoria Young if that was her dog and Victoria Young, hanging her head, stated, "yes."

I then requested that Crime Scene respond to this address so additional photographs could be taken of the outside area surrounding the firepit.

After Crime Scene finished, Victoria Young was transported back to the Warren Police Department.

August 1, 2018 1444 hours

Warren Police Department

Interview Room #1

Vicky Young Interview #2 Summary

After returning to the residence on Palmyra Road, evidence was located which resulted in the arrest of Victoria Young. Victoria was taken back to the Warren Police Department for a second interview regarding the evidence located at her residence.

- Victoria stated her dog was hit by a vehicle approximately a week prior to this interview.
- Victoria stated she walked towards the injured animal to see if it was still alive.
- Victoria stated the dogs face was “smashed in” and blood was coming out of the dog’s mouth and nose.
- Victoria stated she was going to take the dog to the vet, but it stopped breathing.
- Victoria stated after about twenty-five minutes after the dog was struck by the vehicle, Scott returned home from the store. Victoria states Scott moved the dog from the roadway into the front yard of the residence. Victoria stated shortly after the dog was moved from the roadway, it stopped breathing.
- Victoria stated after the dog stopped breathing, Scott put the dog in the firepit.
- Victoria stated she did not contact the police because she believes they wouldn’t have done anything.
- Victoria stated she did not tell us about the dog located in the firepit because she was “scared”.
- Victoria stated a notebook labeled “Dogs” located inside her residence belongs to Scott.
- Victoria stated Scott would search the internet on how to cook different animals. Victoria provided examples such as “fried Ginny Pigs” and “how to cook dogs”. Victoria states she asked Scott about it and he stated it was just a “joke”.

Victoria Young was ultimately arrested and charged with Cruelty to Animals and transported to the Trumbull County Jail.

All this information was provided to the investigators with the Canton Police Department.

Scott Winter was later indicted by the Stark County Grand Jury, and subsequently pled guilty to the F5, Goddard’s Law. He was sentenced to the full year in prison but was released after serving just 3 months. Attached is the very lengthy criminal history of Scott Winter.

Crimes Scott Winter has been CHARGED with:

Aggravated Burglary

Breaking and Entering

Trafficking in Drugs

Domestic Violence

Breaking and Entering / Resisting Arrest

Felonious Assault

Cruelty to Animals

Obstructing Official Business

Prohibitions Concerning Companion Animals

CONCLUSION

During my tenure, I have investigated or assisted with investigations involving homicide, felonious assault, rape, human trafficking, and narcotics trafficking. During these investigations, I have been exposed to the worst humankind can provide. Most of my experience, during my time employed with the Warren Police Department, has been with the neglect of companion animals while conducting narcotics related investigations. Most drug traffickers, in my experience, have pit bulls as a deterrent and keep them at their place of business. These companion animals, in general, are not taken care of and are kept in poor living conditions, to include being left outside during the winter or being caged overnight, sleeping in their own urine and feces. When I became aware of the crimes involving Scott Winter, I was exposed to another level of cruelty. The fact that Scott Winter would brutally kill and skin a companion animal in front of one of his children and then leave the animal inside the residence until it began to decompose was appalling. Making matters worse, the other adult, Victoria Young, allowed these children to be exposed to this violence. Victoria Young allowed this companion animal to remain inside the residence, deceased, for days, until it began to smell. Two adults, responsible for raising these children, allowed them to be exposed to one of the most appalling crimes I have heard of during my time employed with the Warren Police Department.

This concludes my testimony and I welcome and questions on this matter.