

From: Cheryl Law

Sent: Tuesday, December 11, 2007 1:17 PM

Subject: Introduced Yesterday - Senate Bill S.2439 asks FBI to Track Animal Cruelty Crimes

S.2439: A bill to require the National Incident Based Reporting System, the Uniform Crime Reporting Program, and the Law Enforcement National Data Exchange Program to list cruelty to animals as a separate offense category.

Sponsor: [Sen Menendez, Robert](#) [NJ] (introduced 12/10/2007)

Cosponsors: [Sen Dole, Elizabeth](#) [NC] - 12/10/2007 [Sen Kennedy, Edward M.](#) [MA] - 12/10/2007 - [Sen Levin, Carl](#) [MI] - 12/10/2007

Cosponsors (3)

Committees: Senate Judiciary

Latest Major Action: 12/10/2007 Referred to Senate committee.

Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Humane Groups Applaud Menendez Bill to Make Animal Cruelty a Separate Category in Crime Data Reporting System (December 10, 2007)—The Humane Society of the United States and the Humane Society Legislative Fund today welcomed the introduction of new legislation in the U.S. Senate, introduced by Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), directing the Federal Bureau of Investigation to include animal cruelty crimes as a separate category in the agency's crime data reporting system.

"Having the ability to track animal cruelty cases anywhere in the country is a long overdue step that would not only help animals, but would also give law enforcement agencies the tools they need to prevent violent offenders from escalating their terrible behavior," said Michael Markarian, executive vice president of The Humane Society of the United States, and president of the Humane Society Legislative Fund. "We are grateful to Senator Menendez for introducing this important anti-crime bill, for the sake of animals, and for public safety and security in our communities."

The Tracking Animal Cruelty Crimes Act of 2007 directs the U.S. Attorney General to modify the FBI's crime data reporting systems, which include the Uniform Crime Reporting Program, the National Incident-Based Reporting System, and the yet-to-be released Law Enforcement National Data Exchange (N-DEx), to list cruelty to animals as a separate offense category.

"Clearly, giving police and policymakers accurate information about animal cruelty crimes would help attack the persistent problems of family violence, combat the increasingly lucrative industry of dogfighting, and help stop violent criminals and gangs before they commit even worse crimes," said Sen. Menendez.

Although all states have anti-cruelty laws and 43 states provide felony-level penalties, local police agencies do not have a place in their reporting forms to enter these crimes. The result is that animal cruelty crimes are assigned to miscellaneous categories that provide no further guidance to law enforcement agents or policymakers. Without accurate tracking, there is no way to access important information such as trends or the relationship to demographic and geographic data, on which to base policy development and resource allocation.

Research clearly demonstrates that there is a close association between animal abuse and family violence, as well as other crimes. In addition, animal abuse frequently is one of the first signals of a

child, and family, at risk. For example:

- Pet abuse was identified as one of the four predictors for intimate partner violence in a recent study conducted by a nationally-recognized team of domestic violence researchers;
- Multiple studies found that from 48.8 percent to 71 percent of battered women reported that their pets had been threatened, harmed, and or killed by their partners;
- Among children, pet abuse is an early indicator of anti-social behavior. All the experts agree that early identification and intervention is the key to helping children at risk;
- Department of Justice longitudinal studies found that pet abuse in childhood is associated with persistence in anti-social behavior;
- Adults who engage in animal cruelty are more likely to participate in other criminal activities, including violence against people, drug and substance abuse, and property offenses;
- During the 1980s, in developing profiles of serial killers, the FBI's Behavioral Crime Unit discovered that all serial killers had engaged in repeated acts of animal cruelty;
- Animal fighting, often an economic-driven form of animal cruelty, is associated with gambling, selling and possession of drugs, illegal firearms, gang activity, and other violent behavior;

"We know that early identification and intervention is a key to solving the problem of violence in our communities," said Mary Lou Randour, Ph.D., director of human/animal relations for The Humane Society of the United States. "The addition of animal cruelty to the FBI crime database would provide an important tool for those efforts."

Sen. Menendez was joined in introducing the bill today by co-sponsors Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.), Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.). In the House of Representatives, Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) have been leading the effort to add animal cruelty to the FBI's crime data reporting system.