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TO: Members of the Assembly Judiciary Committee

FROM: Representative André Jacque

DATE: May 14, 2015

RE: Pets in Protective Orders - Assembly Bill 141

Dear Chairman Ott and Committee Members,

Thank you very much for hearing Assembly Bill 141 in committee today.

Domestic abuse is often as much about asserting control and leverage against a victim as it is physical violence. I am proud that last session we adopted a number of enhancements to our temporary restraining order protections including recognizing stalking behavior as a reason for issuing a TRO.

This legislation removes one more barrier that an abuser can use to otherwise lure a victim back to a dangerous situation, by allowing household pets to be included within protective orders. You will hear other testimony today about how nearly half of domestic abuse victims delay leaving an abusive situation because of the possible harm that could come to their pets. These statistics are backed up by conversations that I have had with many victim advocates and I have spoken with judges including former district attorneys and assistant district attorneys who feel granting this specific authority as more than half of states (including our neighbors Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois) have done will make their colleagues feel more comfortable in granting such protections.

As a member of the Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse for the past two sessions, this has clearly been a priority piece of legislation, and I very much thank Senator Carpenter for his efforts on this bill as senate author and my many colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have signed on as co-sponsors.

Senator Carpenter and I have introduced identical substitute amendments to this legislation after discussions between our offices and Tony Gibart from End Domestic Abuse. These changes do not substantially alter the protections granted by the original bill but move the operative language of the bill to a more natural location in the statutes. This substitute amendment passed the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee unanimously, and the bill as amended passed the full Senate on a voice vote.

Thank for your consideration and I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 141
Assembly Committee on Judiciary
May 14, 2015

Good morning Chairman Ott and members of the committee. Thank you for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 141, which will explicitly include provisions relating to household pets in temporary restraining orders and injunctions.

I think by now we are all familiar with the established link between abuse of animals and abuse of people. Jeffrey Dahmer, Albert DeSalvo (the Boston Strangler), and Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold are just some of the more well-known criminals who tortured animals before moving on to terrorizing and killing people. The FBI uses animal cruelty as a factor to predict future violent behavior.

This linkage also exists in domestic violence situations. A history of pet abuse is one of the four most significant indicators of people who are at greatest risk of becoming domestic batterers. People who batter pets are more likely to abuse their partners and children.

Abusers often harm or threaten to harm family pets as well as their partners and children. They use pets as pawns to exercise control over the family, to isolate victims, to create an environment of fear, and to punish victims who try to leave or otherwise show independence.

Companion animals are an important source of emotional support and comfort for many abuse victims. Usually the abuser has already isolated the partner from family, friends, and the community. Thus threats to harm or kill pets can be especially devastating.

Abusers often gather the family members around and force them to watch the family pet being killed. The explicit message to the partner and children is that they will be next; that the abuser has the power to destroy anything and everything they love.

The Humane Society of the United States estimates that 1 million animals are abused or killed every year in connection with domestic violence. They are kidnapped, tortured, killed, and surrendered to animal shelters in attempts to intimidate the abusers' human victims.

- A woman in NY State was charged with animal torture for abusing family pets in front of her children. At least 20 dead animals were found buried in her yard. Her son described their home as "a concentration camp for the animals."
- A NY man glued shut the eyes and ears of his partner's Yorkshire terrier.

- A man in Atlanta who punched and choked his wife throughout their marriage told her he would kick the family dog to death if she didn't help him commit a bank robbery.
- A man in Georgia hacked his wife's puppy to death with an ax in front of her and her three children and threatened to decapitate her too.
- A man in Pennsylvania shot the family dog to death, forced his four children to clean up afterwards, and threatened to kill them if they told anyone.

According to the ASPCA, 68% of battered women in Wisconsin revealed that abusive partners had also been violent toward pets or livestock. More than three-quarters of these cases occurred in the presence of the women and/or children to intimidate and control them.

71% of pet-owning women entering domestic violence shelters report that their abusers threatened, harmed, or killed family pets. Although the situation is slowly improving, only a very small percentage of domestic violence shelters currently allow victims to bring their animals with them. Thus, up to **half** of all domestic violence survivors report that they delayed leaving abusive situations because they feared for their pets' safety. Domestic violence victims have been known to live in their cars for months until there were openings at pet-friendly shelters.

Including companion animals in temporary restraining orders and injunctions will give additional legal protection to both the pets and the human victims of domestic violence. It is my understanding that judges could issue these orders under current law, but are reluctant to do so because the statutes don't explicitly allow them to do so. Over half of the states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico already have pet protective order laws in effect. That includes our neighboring states of Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois.

Last month, federal legislation known as the Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act of 2015 was introduced to increase protection for the pets of domestic violence victims. One of the provisions in this legislation encourages states to include coverage of pets in protection orders. That's exactly what AB 141 does.

This common-sense legislation has the support of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, Legal Action of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and the WI Veterinary Medical Association. I hope it has your support as well.



Wisconsin State Senate
Senator Tim Carpenter
Third District

Assembly Judiciary Committee

Testimony in Support for Assembly Bill 141

Representative Jim Ott (Chair).

I would like to thank Chairman Ott and members of the Assembly Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

I would also like to thank Rep. André Jacque for being the lead author on AB 141, and for his support and advocacy for this bill, and its Senate Companion SB 97.

This bill will specifically allow household pets to be listed on a protective order regarding domestic abuse situations. I believe that this bill will help victims of domestic violence by taking away the leverage that the perpetrators can hold over a victim by threatening harm to a victim's pet, or the pet of a victim's child.

Under current law, a victim of abuse, harassment, or threats may obtain a temporary restraining order against the perpetrator.

This bill will allow a court to specifically include in any such restraining order a provision pertaining to household pets. For example, the court could order that the perpetrator refrain from removing, harming, mistreating, or disposing of a household pet.

Abusers will hold things over the victim to control them, and one of the things they can go after is the victim's dog or cat. Also, victims can be reluctant to leave or report a violent situation if they fear a pet will be retaliated against. The reluctance or inability to flee an abusive relationship places domestic-violence victims – and their children and pets – at a much greater risk.

In reviewing news articles about the passage of a similar bill in Ohio, I was struck by the report that many judges are reluctant to include animals in protection orders because the authority to do so is not spelled out in state law. The intent of this bill is to remove any such reluctance.

The Senate Companion bill (SB 97), was amended in committee, passed out of the Senate Committee on Judiciary on a unanimous vote, and has passed the senate. (The identical amendment has been introduced by the lead author of AB 141, Rep. André Jacque).

This bill would allow Wisconsin to join 28 other states that help protect victims of domestic abuse and other violence by shielding their pets from harm.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

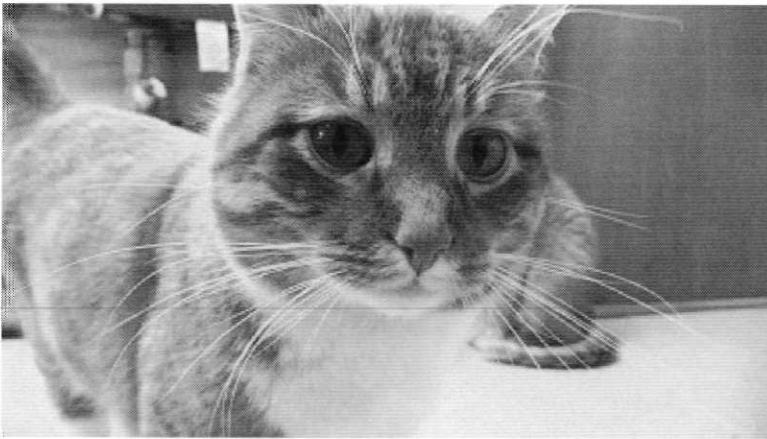
NEWS STORIES



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PHILLIPS - Domestic abuse situations can, of course, get very complicated. But when couples share custody of a pet, those delicate situations can become even more difficult.

Becky Steinbach, a Sexual Assault Program Coordinator with TimeOut of Price County, says the abuser may hurt the animal, or the victim might feel reluctant to leave the home and leave the pet behind.

Steinbach says TimeOut's workers hear story after story of innocent pets involved in abusive situations.

"[Victims say,] 'I see this happening to my pet constantly. My abuser has a bad day or we get into an argument, and they take it out on my pet. I fear for my safety, I fear for my pet's safety.'"

In some abusive relationships, a pet is the only ally a victim can trust.

"They rely pretty heavily on their pets for companionship," Steinbach said. "With that, the abuser knows that and will torture the pet, or hurt the pet in some way, or threaten to, if the victim is to leave."

"It is one more element of control that an abuser has over a victim," said Rep. Andre Jacque (R-DePere).

Jacque worked with Sen. Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) to create a bill that would expand restraining order options in domestic violence situations. The bill would allow judges to include pets in restraining orders.

"In approximately half of all domestic abuse cases, it is a significant factor in delaying leaving that very negative situation," Jacque said.

The proposed bill might give victims more protection in situations that include pets.

"I had somebody come in. The abuser had killed two of their dogs," Steinbach said. "She said, 'I know we're next, because we're not getting another dog.'"

TimeOut serves Price, Rusk, and Washburn Counties. Their Rusk County shelter in Ladysmith has an agreement with the local animal shelter. Pets of abuse victims can stay at the animal shelter while the victim stays at the abuse shelter.

"A lot of shelters, ours included, are looking at being some sort of kenneling system ourselves, where maybe it's in a garage or a separate building," said Steinbach.

Other shelters in the Northwoods area say they hear major concerns on a regular basis about domestic abuse and pets. HAVEN serves Lincoln County, and the Tri-County Council serves Oneida, Forest, and Vilas Counties. Both organizations often hear similar concerns.

Jacque's restraining order bill passed the state Senate on a voice vote Wednesday. If the Assembly passes the bill and Gov. Scott Walker signs it, which looks likely, Wisconsin would become the 29th state with a law of this kind.

"I am very happy that this is an area where there has been very strong and consistent bipartisan support," Jacque said.

testimony

To: Members of the Committee on Judiciary
Date: May 14, 2015
From: Tony Gibart, Public Policy Director
Re: Support for AB 141



Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence
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Chairperson Ott and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in strong support of Assembly Bill 141, which proposes to address one of the most common barriers victims of domestic violence face when attempting to seek safety. My name is Tony Gibart, and I represent End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin. End Abuse is the statewide membership organization that is the voice for survivors of domestic violence and local domestic violence victim service providers. We strongly support the legislation and urge the Committee to approve its passage.

Upon first thought, you might not think that a pet would be a reason for a domestic violence victim to remain in an abusive home. But upon further consideration, this reason makes sense. Personally, I know I can't even plan a weekend trip without thinking about my dog and who will take care of her while I am gone. If you have a pet, I am sure you can relate to this situation. Now instead of considering a relaxing weekend away, consider planning an attempt to flee your home because you are afraid your partner or spouse will harm you or even kill you. In midst of all of the trauma and anxiety, you would also be concerned about what will happen to your pet. Indeed, surveys of victims show that more than half of victims with pets, at least, delay leaving out of concern for their pets.

Domestic violence victims usually understand the danger posed by their abusers better than anyone, and victims' concern for their pets is well founded. Abusers' threats to harm, and actual harm of, pets are very common and effective tactics to control and to debilitate victims. Some studies show that up to 70 percent of domestic violence cases involve abuse to a pet. Abusers harm pets because it sends a very clear, terrifying and potent message to victims: "I will beat or kill the pet just like I will beat or kill you if you leave or step out of line." Abusing a pet exploits victims' vulnerabilities; because domestic abusers commonly sabotage victims' connections with family and friends, the victim's relationship to a beloved pet may be one of the few loving, hope-giving relationships the victim has left.

Assembly Bill 141 would give victims some protection from these brutal and ruthless tactics. It will make it easier for many victims to take that courageous step towards safety and independence, and it will relieve them of some worry and anxiety while they do so. As of 2014, 29 states (as well as D.C. and Puerto Rico) have enacted legislation that includes provisions for pets in domestic abuse protection orders. With Assembly Bill 141, Wisconsin would join these jurisdictions and provide that courts issuing restraining orders may make provisions to stop abuse and harm to a household pet. The bill will also allow victims to take custody of pets so they can ensure the pet's care and safety. As I have said, because abusers commonly and effectively harm pets to continue to control, to abuse and to batter their victims, these provisions are necessary to better protect domestic violence victims in Wisconsin. Thank you, and I again urge you to support this bill.



The power of compassion.

**Anne Reed, Wisconsin Humane Society
Testimony in Support of 2015 Assembly Bill 141
Assembly Committee on Judiciary
May 14, 2015**

Honorable Chairman and committee members,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 141.

About the Wisconsin Humane Society

The Wisconsin Humane Society is in a unique position to understand the link between domestic violence against people and violence against animals. We are not the Humane Society of the United States, nor are we related to them in any way. In fact, there is no national network of animal shelters. Every local "humane society" is separate from the others, and local. The national organizations you've heard of, including the Humane Society of the United States, are primarily advocacy organizations and do little or no actual sheltering of animals.

The Wisconsin Humane Society, by contrast, is Wisconsin's oldest and largest animal welfare organization, helping animals here in Wisconsin since 1879. Today we have three shelters: in Milwaukee (right at the border with Wauwatosa); Ozaukee County in Saukville; and Racine, where we've been proudly helping animals since 2013. We find homes for about 10,000 homeless animals every year. There are no time or space limits for animals in our adoption program, and we helped pioneer the processes that have made it possible for other shelters to achieve that goal. Most important for purposes of this hearing, one of our most important programs is to provide safe shelter for the animals of women and men seeking safety from domestic violence.

People seek safety only when animals are safe.

As you explore the potential of this legislation, you'll hear many compelling stories and statistics about the link between domestic violence and violence against animals. I'd like to focus on just one aspect of that compelling body of research. We can't make women, children, and men safe from domestic violence unless we make their animals safe as well.

We all remember hearing how, during Hurricane Katrina, people refused to leave their flooded homes because they would not leave their animals behind. The same is true for domestic violence, and the research on this is very clear. Twelve independent studies have reported that between 18% and 48% of domestic violence victims – the median was 31% -- delay leaving abusive situations out of fear for the safety of their animals.¹ Of course, the figure is even higher when animals have already been abused,

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The power of compassion.

as is often the case. A 2004 study found that 65 percent of women whose pets had actually been abused reported delaying going to a shelter because they were concerned for their pets' welfare.ⁱⁱ

This means there are people right now, as we talk here, who are in a situation where they're actively at risk for domestic violence, often where their children are too, and fear for their animal is keeping them in that place of danger. We may wish that weren't true, but it is. It's the nature of the human heart to protect the vulnerable and voiceless, even when protecting them puts us at risk ourselves.

AB 141 will be an important addition to private efforts

If we can make those animals safe, we will go a long way toward helping those women, children, and men get to safety. There are many important private efforts in this direction, and we're proud to be part of some of them. The Stop Abuse advertising campaign in the Milwaukee area,ⁱⁱⁱ for example, is a collaborative effort to encourage people to call 911 when they see animal abuse, because doing so saves people as well as animals. At the Wisconsin Humane Society, we're proud to offer our Safe Haven program in partnership with Sojourner Family Peace Center.^{iv} Through Safe Haven, we're able to provide safe housing for animals of families seeking safety, and then reunite those families with their animals once they're settled in a safe place. We've sheltered more than 70 animals so far through this program, and I want to share with you some of the things clients have told us about the difference it made:

- "If it wasn't for this program, I don't think I would have been able to find safety [because] I could never leave Lexi. Honestly, Lexi's safety seemed more important than mine[.]"
- "Words cannot express how grateful I am to this program. Knowing my 'kids' were safe and well-cared for was a 110% relief for me. They are my world."
- "Knowing he was safe ... I could focus on my family."

So we in the private sector are doing what we can. But we all know that judges have a unique ability to prevent domestic violence if we give them the right tools. This bill tells judges without question or ambiguity that they have the power to order abusers not only to leave their human victims alone, but to leave animals alone. By doing that, judges will protect not only those animals, but also the women, children, and men who love them so deeply.

ⁱ Ascione, F. R. (2007). Emerging research on animal abuse as a risk factor for intimate partner violence. In K. Kendall-Tackett & S. Giacomoni (Eds.), *Intimate partner violence* (pp. 3-1 to 3-17). Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute

ⁱⁱ Carlisle-Frank, P., Frank, J. M., & Nielsen, L. (2004). Selective battering of the family pet. *Anthrozoös*, 17, 26-42.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.spotabuse.org/>

^{iv} <http://www.wihumane.org/services/shelter-for-domestic-violence-victims>



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence
against people and animals*

The National Resource Center on the Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence

37 Hillside Road, Stratford, NJ 08084 • 856-627-5118 • www.nationallinkcoalition.org • arkowpets@snip.net

April 14, 2015

*A spaniel, a woman
and a walnut tree:
the more they're beaten
the better they be.*
-- Old English proverb

To the Wisconsin State Legislature:

The National Link Coalition – which serves as the National Resource Center on The Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence – has been following the rapid enactment of statutes that enable courts to include animals in domestic violence Protection-From-Abuse orders. Since these were introduced in Maine in 2006, 28 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted such legislation. Our coalition – 25 of our 2,385 members are Wisconsin residents – is in support of AB 141 and SB 97.

In the battles of power and control that mark domestic violence cases, batterers take advantage of any opportunity to intimidate their victims, often using pets with whom the victim has a close emotional attachment.

- As many as **71%** of victims in women's shelters report that their abuser harmed, killed or threatened family pets. (*Ascione, Weber & Wood, 1997*).
- Twelve independent surveys report that **between 18% and 48%** of battered women delay their decision to leave, or return to their batterer, out of fear for the welfare of their pets or livestock (*Ascione, 2007*).

Considerable evidence corroborates the anecdotal reports of domestic violence survivors:

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

1. Animal abuse is consistent with, and often co-occurs with, the power and control mechanisms prevalent in intimate partner violence.

In a case in East Toledo, Ohio, involving a couple with marital disputes, when she returned home her husband told her, "Your dinner is in the oven." When she went into the kitchen she found he had baked her cat to death at 500 degrees.

Pets become pawns in the game of power and control when batterers manipulate, intimidate and retaliate against their victims. Abusers take advantage of women's and children's attachments to pets by threatening to harm or kill the family pet to ensure the woman will not leave or that the child will not report the abuse.

- As many as **13%** of intentional animal abuse cases involve domestic violence (*Humane Society of the U.S., 2001*).
- One study reported that **87%** of batterer-perpetrated pet abuse was committed in the presence of their partners for the purpose of revenge or control (*Quinlisk, 1999*).
- **41%** of batterers have adult histories of abusing animals (compared to 1.5% of the general population) (*Febres et al., 2014*).
- Animals are targeted by abusers who are jealous that the woman gives more attention to her pets than to him. Pets remain at risk even after a relationship has ended, with abusers extracting vengeance against the pets belonging to family members and friends who helped the woman to leave (*Roguski, 2012*).

2. If he's hurting animals, the women and children are often next.

Many women blame themselves for the batterer's actions; however, showing her that his hurting the pets means the fault lies in his behavior, not hers, she is more likely to realize it is time for her to leave.

- **78%** of abused women reported that animal abuse had occurred "often" or "almost always" during the previous 12 months. Incidents included punching, hitting, choking, drowning, shooting, stabbing, and throwing the animal against a wall or down the stairs. Animal abuse coincided with violent outbursts against human family members **51%** of the time (*Carlisle-Frank & Flanagan, 2006*).

3. The issue is particularly acute in rural areas, where facilities for domestic violence survivors are more limited.

- The Ohio Domestic Violence Network identified significant gaps in services available for women and their animals in rural Ohio (*Ohio Domestic Violence Network, 2012*).
- Studies in Wisconsin, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island found that abusers often retaliate by torturing or killing livestock as well as pets. This is of particular concern in rural communities (*Faver & Strand, 2003; Lembke, 1999; Doherty & Hornosty, 2008*).

4. Female pet owners often have strong emotional ties to their animals that make them particularly vulnerable.

Researchers have found that women express considerable empathy, affection and concern for animals, which can be used against them by batterers seeking emotional control.

- In nine studies assessing animal abuse as a risk factor for intimate personal violence, **between 40.2% and 90.6%** of battered women had pets in their homes (Ascione, 2007).

5. In addition to harm to animals and battered women, cruelty to animals has deleterious effects on children’s development.

Children’s witnessing or perpetrating animal cruelty should be considered an Adverse Childhood Experience and a risk factor for future health concerns.

- Children who are exposed to domestic violence are nearly three times more likely to have been cruel to animals than children not exposed to such violence (Currie, 2006).
- **32%** of battered women reported their children had hurt or killed a family pet (Ascione, 1998).

THE INTERGENERATIONAL CYCLE OF VIOLENCE



(National Link Coalition, 2014)

One Part of the Solution: Including Animals in Protective Orders

Including animals in protective orders removes one obstacle that prevents victims from seeking safety. It ensures their welfare, protects all victims, and breaks the cycles of family violence.

Including pets in domestic violence protective orders is a proactive step toward combating the cycle of interpersonal violence and recognizes that intimate partner violence adversely affects the health, safety and welfare of all members of the family.

- The nation's most comprehensive collaborative program to combat domestic violence is currently under way in **Milwaukee**. The "spotabuse.org" campaign determined that the most effective way to reduce domestic violence was to report animal abuse cases to 911. Community partners are the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, the Milwaukee Area Domestic Violence Commission, the Milwaukee Police Department, the Sojourner Family Peace Center, the Wisconsin Humane Society, and SERVE marketing.
- At least **53 domestic violence shelters in Wisconsin** are believed to have established collaborative partnerships with local animal welfare groups to provide safehousing foster care for pets (**Antigo, Appleton, Ashland, Baraboo, Beaver Dam, Beloit, Black River Falls, Crandon, Eau Claire, Elkhorn, Fond du Lac, Green Bay, Hayward, Janesville, Jefferson, Kenosha, La Crosse, Lac du Flambeau, Ladysmith, Madison, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marshfield, Medford, Menomonie, Merrill, Milltown, Milwaukee, Monroe, Neenah, Neillsville, Platteville, Rhinelander, Richland Center, River Falls, Saukville, Sheboygan, Sparta, Sturgeon Bay, Superior, Viroqua, Waukesha, Wausau, West Bend, Wisconsin Rapids**).
- One pet-friendly domestic violence shelter in **Appleton** has built animal kennels at the shelter in order to maintain the safety and integrity of the entire family – both two-legged and four-legged members.

Including pets in domestic violence protection orders protects communities and addresses the links of violence that envelop all vulnerable members of Wisconsin's families.

"About a hundred miles down the interstate, he opened the car door and ordered my daughter Christine to kick our dog Dusty out. When she refused, he told her he would do to Dusty what he did to Rocko, only he would do it right this time, and she could watch while he tortured and killed Dusty and dumped her off the side of the road, too. Then he said he would come home and kill me and Christine would be left alone with him.

"He raped Christine her first night alone in our new home while I was at work. She had just turned eight."

-- Marsha Millikin: "Life and Death Inside the Cycles of Violence."

Support AB141/SB 97

Providing a Pet Protection Order in Wisconsin

Wisconsin Voters for Companion Animals urges legislators to support AB141/SB97 which would allow victims of domestic violence to include household pets in restraining orders.

State laws that provide for “pet protective orders” are critical to protecting domestic abuse victims and their animals. Currently 28 states have similar laws.

A 1995 study of women’s shelters in Wisconsin showed that 86% of the women had pets, and 80% of those women reported that the batterer had also been violent to their pet. Animal abuse is an effective and traumatic way for an abuser to exercise power and control over his victim.

This bill will also be welcomed by professionals who work in the fields of animal care and welfare and family violence protection. Many have heard accounts or witnessed first hand the cruelty inflicted on pets left alone in homes with abusers. Sometimes the pets are killed.

We urge you as legislators to support AB141/SB 97 to make Wisconsin the next state to protect victims of domestic violence and their pets.



Wisconsin Voters for Companion Animals is a
grass- roots companion animal advocacy group.

WIVotersforCompanionAnimals.com



May 13, 2015

My name is Megan Senatori. I am the Co-Founder and President of “SAAV” – Sheltering Animals of Abuse Victims. I am also an attorney in private practice in Madison. Due to scheduling conflicts, I may be unable to testify live before the Assembly Committee on the Judiciary at tomorrow’s hearing on Assembly Bill 141. Therefore, I am submitting this written testimony in the event that I cannot be present.

SAAV is a 501(c)(3) all-volunteer non-profit organization based in Dane County (saavprogram.org). SAAV plays a unique role in the fight against family violence. Through a network of foster homes, we provide temporary, confidential and safe refuge for the pets of domestic abuse victims in Dane County while the victim seeks safety from an abusive partner. Since 2001, we have provided safe refuge to hundreds of animals and served countless victims and their children through our services. We provide our shelter services through a collaboration with Domestic Abuse Intervention Services and the Dane County Humane Society. We also provide community outreach nationwide about the link between domestic violence and animal abuse, including assisting other groups with starting shelter programs like ours in their own community.

I urge you to support Assembly Bill 141. Why are the protections in this bill necessary? Because batterers use a variety of tools to terrorize their victims and any children in the family – sadly, family pets routinely become another tool in a batterer’s arsenal.

I first began this work in 2000 while a law student at UW Law School. At a conference in Virginia Beach, I learned about a case in Northern Wisconsin. A victim had escaped to safety in a domestic abuse shelter, but she left the safety of shelter and returned to her batterer to save the life of her dog. She left because, while in shelter, she received photographs showing her batterer cutting the ears off of her beloved dog with garden shears. The advocate who had been working with that victim never heard from her again.

I returned to Madison and began immediately exploring what resources were available in my own community for domestic abuse victims with pets. Sadly, there was no real safety net. I co-founded SAAV with the hope that victims in Dane County would never again have to make the terrible decision to “choose” their personal safety at the risk of harm or even the death of a beloved pet. SAAV is just one resource for victims. It is not enough.

Throughout our state, there are victims, particularly in rural communities, who are staying in abusive relationships because they have no safe shelter for their pets and they

fear the courts will provide no protections for their pets if they leave their abuser. This bill would remove a barrier to safety for those victims. Up to 48% of victims report that they delayed leaving a batterer due to a concern for the lives of their pets. How many victims never leave? How many victims, having achieved personal safety, later return to their batterer, as the victim in Northern Wisconsin did, to save the life of a pet?

This bill would save lives. It's that simple. That is why the companion bill, Senate Bill 97, was unanimously passed by the Senate Judiciary & Public Safety Committee and unanimously passed by the Senate. That is why at least 28 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have such laws in place to protect victims in their states. Our neighbors, Minnesota and Illinois, have laws like the one that is before you today.

Finally, I'd like to sincerely thank Representative Andre Jacque, as well as the members of this Committee (Chair/Representative Jim Ott and Representative Thomas Larson), for being among the Representatives who introduced this important bill in the Assembly. Victims and their children in our great state deserve the protections afforded by this bill. Their safety depends upon it. Thank you.

Consider these statistics:

- A 1995 survey of seventy-two women seeking refuge in domestic violence shelters in Wisconsin found that 86% of the women had pets and in 80% of those cases the batterer had abused the pets. (Arkow, 1996).
- Multiple studies have found that as many as 71 percent of battered women report that their animals had been threatened, harmed or killed by their partners (Ascione, Weber & Wood, 1997; Flynn, 2000; Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004).
- Pet abuse was identified as one of four significant predictors for intimate partner violence in a recent study (Walton-Moss, Manganello, Frye, & Campbell 2005).
- A national survey of 50 battered women's shelters found that 85 percent of the women and 63 percent of the children who entered shelters discussed incidents of pet abuse in their family (Ascione et al., 1997).
- A survey of pet-owning families with substantiated child abuse and neglect found that animals were abused in 88 percent of homes where child physical abuse was present (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood, 1983).
- An estimated 30 to 60 percent of the families where either domestic violence or child maltreatment is identified, it is likely that both forms of abuse exist. (US Department of Health & Human Services).