

## Judge Rules NYC Dogs Can Go Leashless

**Pet canines can keep roaming free from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. at some parks.**

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A judge in the NYC borough of Queens has ruled that dog owners can continue to let their pets loose at night in some parks in the city.

The city generally requires dogs to be leashed in all public places, but for about 20 years, certain parks have allowed dogs to run free from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m.

In issuing his ruling on Nov. 30, state Supreme Court Judge Peter Kelly urged officials to make the unofficial policy more explicit, something the city Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has already been considering.

In March 2006, a Queens community group called the Juniper Park Civic Association sued to stop the practice, saying the policy is dangerous and conflicts with the leash law.

“Many of our neighbors no longer use our parks, and many park volunteers have stopped doing the great work they do, because of the intimidating presence of off-leash dogs,” Queens Civic Congress President Sean Walsh said in a statement. The congress is a group of 104 local organizations against the free-roaming dog policy.

But Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe has said the practice is safe and allows dogs to exercise and socialize.