

## Stronger Dog Laws Approved in Washington, D.C.

**Provisions call for stiffer penalties for dogfight spectators and those guilty of animal cruelty.**

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Washington, D.C., animal cruelty and control laws just got tougher.

On Tuesday, the city council unanimously approved B17-89, which includes stiffer penalties for spectators at dogfights. The bill, introduced by councilmember Mary M. Cheh, is the culmination of an initiative by George Washington University Law School's Animal Welfare Project launched in 2004.

In addition to stricter penalties for people who attend dogfights – making it a felony instead of a misdemeanor – the bill also allows for courts to order those found guilty of animal cruelty to seek counseling.

The measure also includes a section that requires law enforcement and child and protective service workers to report suspected pet abuse, or when they see an animal at the home of someone who's suspected of abusing a child, adult, or pet.

Other provisions called for in the ordinance: Require permits for commercial dog breeders who raise and sell 25 animals per year. Establish licensing, immunization, insurance, and notification requirements for commercial guard dogs. Require the inclusion of pets in disaster plans. Increase licensing fees for animals who are not spayed or neutered to encourage sterilization and reduce the euthanasia of shelter pets. Sets up a spay-neuter fund to assist lower-income residents in gaining access to these services for their pets.