

Dog, Cat Cruelty Bill Defeated in Arkansas

Failure of dog, cat cruelty bill leaves crime a misdemeanor.

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An Arkansas bill to make cruelty to dogs and cats a felony was defeated March 26 in a split vote by a House committee.

Senate Bill 777 failed in a 5-8 vote by the House Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development Committee. Under the bill, aggravated cruelty to dogs and cats would have become a Class D felony punishable by up to six years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.

The bill, introduced by state Sen. Sue Madison, passed last week in the Senate in a 21-5 vote, after receiving the endorsement of the Senate Judiciary Committee. In the House, the bill was presented Rep. Pam Adcock, then referred to the Agriculture Committee.

Adcock said she was "extremely disappointed" by the vote but that she did not plan to present the bill again.

Although SB 777 was shot down, many in the state, including the Arkansas Farm Bureau have come out in support of House Bill 2788 by Rep. Rick Saunders.

Saunders' bill would make aggravated cruelty to a dog, cat or horse a Class A misdemeanor on first offense and a Class D felony on any subsequent offense occurring within five years of a previous aggravated cruelty offense.

HB 2788 passed in the House last week in a 57-26 vote. It has since been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.