

Illinois Lawmakers Approve Dog Abuse Penalties

Unanimously approved measure is one of the strongest pieces of anti-canine attack legislation in state history.

The Illinois House of Representatives on Tuesday unanimously approved legislation that aims to prevent future vicious dog attacks by placing more responsibility on owners to properly raise, control, and care for the animals.

House Bill 4238 would increase the penalties for unprovoked attacks by dogs that have been declared vicious, in cases where the owner allows the dog to run at large, to three to seven years in prison, plus a \$25,000 fine.

It also increases penalties for the owner when a dog has been declared dangerous and kills a human. That offense would be punishable with two to five years in prison and a \$25,000 fine, which goes to the state.

For dogs running at large, the cap for local fines also would be increased to \$1,000, from the current \$50.

The legislation was filed in December in response to the fatal attack last of a 14-year-old girl by four dogs near her home in the northwest Illinois town of Erie. The incident was the states only fatal dog attack of 2005.

The proposal now goes to the desk of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich for review.

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