

## Illinois Considering Bill to Protect Dogs

**Proposed bill would protect dogs and other pets by including them in an owner's restraining order.**

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The Illinois state Senate is considering a bill that would help people seeking court protection from abusive spouses or others get the same protection for their pets.

Currently, orders of protection are used to bar potentially violent people from having contact only with people they've threatened. The proposed new law, HB-9, would extend that protection to pets, who can sometimes become targets in family disputes.

Aggravated animal cruelty and animal torture are already felonies in Illinois, and dogs and cats can be included in orders of protection by listing them as property. But pets' inclusion in orders of protection could deter retaliatory abusive behavior from occurring, officials hope.

The bill would grant to people who file restraining orders "the exclusive care, custody, or control of any animal owned, possessed, leased, kept, or held" by the petitioner or a designee. It would also forbid the subject of the restraining order "from taking, transferring, encumbering, concealing, harming, or otherwise disposing of the animal."

Maine, New York, and Vermont passed comparable laws in 2006, and Connecticut, New Jersey and Rhode Island are also currently considering similar legislation.

One of the impetuses for the proposed Illinois law was the case of a man who last July tore the head off his girlfriend's kitten and left it in her yard after an argument. The man, Jacob Thornton, was eventually convicted of felony animal cruelty and is currently serving a two-year prison sentence.