

Ohio Representatives Seek State Pit Bull Ban

Bill calls for pit bull-type dogs to be surrendered to dog wardens or seized.

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Citing a "pit bull issue" in Ohio, two state representatives forged a partnership to craft an approach that they said would put a stop to the vicious training of pit bulls.

State Rep. Tyrone Yates of Cincinnati introduced legislation to ban residents from keeping pit bull-type dogs. If enacted, House Bill 568 requires owners of these dogs to surrender the animals to dog wardens to be euthanized.

State Rep. Shawn Webster of Hanover, a practicing veterinarian, agreed to work with Yates after the introduction of HB 568. The bill states "no person may own, keep, or harbor a dog that belongs to a breed that is commonly known as a pit bull dog." Owners would have 90 days after the bill goes into effect to surrender pit bulls to the dog warden of the county in which they reside.

If there is probable cause to believe a person owns or is harboring or keeping a pit bull, the bill would make it OK for an officer to obtain a search warrant and seize the dog, and then turn it over to the dog warden.

"I introduced legislation to ban pit bulls as a springboard for discussion on a vital public safety issue for Ohio," Yates said in a statement. "Pit bulls raised in urban neighborhoods to be aggressive pose a threat to our children and our communities, and I am serious about stopping this dangerous practice."

Thousands of people have added their signatures to an online petition to urge state lawmakers to block the bill, calling it unfair, breed-specific legislation. Opponents of the bill believe it will punish the responsible dog owners and drive the irresponsible ones further underground.

"I'm glad constituents have contacted me about their concerns as we engage in this important dialogue," Yates said, "which will hopefully lead to comprehensive legislation protecting gentle family pets while putting a stop to the violent training of pit bulls."

The House bill was assigned to the Ohio Government and Elections Committee for review. A hearing date has not been set.