

Pit Bull Owners Sue Denver

Several Pit Bull owners have filed a lawsuit saying Denver's breed-specific ban is unconstitutional.

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Three dog owners in Colorado who moved out of Denver because of the city's ban on Pit Bulls have filed a federal lawsuit in U.S. District Court, saying the ban is unconstitutional.

The suit was filed April 6 by Lakewood, Colorado-based attorney Karen Breslin and the Progressive Law Center on behalf of Sonya Dias and Hillary Engel, who said they were forced to move out of Denver because of the anti-Pit Bull ordinance; and Sheryl White, who says her dog was seized under the ban.

Denver first banned Pit Bulls in 1989 in reaction to two separate mauling attacks. But in 2004, the Colorado Legislature passed a law prohibiting breed-specific bans. However, the city sued and a judge ruled in favor of the city in April 2005.

Denver's ban applies to Pit Bulls and similar mixed-breed dogs, regardless of the animal's actual behavior. Critics of the ordinance say that a blanket ban on an entire dog breed is misguided and that the law should instead target irresponsible dog owners and all dangerous dogs.

The new suit claims that Denver's anti-Pit Bull ordinance effectively reduces owners' choices to either surrendering their pets to have them euthanized or moving out of the city.

Well over 1,000 dogs have been seized and euthanized since the law went into effect in the spring of 2005, according to the lawsuit's backers.

According to the American Canine Foundation, Denver is one of at least three major metropolitan areas, along with Miami and Cincinnati, to ban Pit Bull-type dogs.