

Texas Senate Approves Dangerous Dog Owner Bill

Owners of dogs involved in attacks could face felony charges.

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Owners of dogs that violently attack people in Texas could face up to 10 years in prison under legislation approved this week by the state Senate.

The legislation, House Bill 1355, was sponsored by state Rep. Dan Gattis and approved on May 17. It allows authorities to charge the owners of dogs that instigate unprovoked attacks with third-degree felonies, which carry potential penalties of two to 10 years in prison.

Current law allows dog owners to be charged only if the animal had previously been deemed dangerous by authorities. The penalty ranges from a \$500 fine to a year in jail.

House Bill 1355, which was introduced in February, is commonly referred to as "Lillian's Law" in honor of a 76-year-old woman who was killed in 2005 by six dogs that escaped from a neighbor's backyard.

In February 2006 a grand jury indicted the dogs' owner for criminally negligent homicide; in April of this year, however, he was found not guilty of the charge.

The bill is expected to move to the governor for signing into law as early as next week.