

## Wisconsin Mulls Two Dog-Related Bills

**Separate pieces of legislation address pet custody battles and extending domestic abuse restraining orders to include pets.**

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The Wisconsin government is currently considering two pieces of pet-related legislation, both addressing pets that caught in the middle of broken families. The first would allow dogs and other pets to be included in domestic violence restraining orders and the other addresses the placement of pets after a divorce or separation.

The first bill would expand the definition of domestic abuse to include the harm – or threat of harm – to animals owned by either party or their children. Introduced by Senators Fred Risser, Tim Carpenter and Julie Lassa, the updated language would allow pets to be covered under restraining orders.

This bill comes on the heels of a nearly identical California bill that was signed into law this month. Maine was the first state to implement this type of legislation in 2006, and many other states have since followed suit.

The second bill the Wisconsin legislature is considering addresses the placement of pets after an annulment, divorce or legal separation. The legislation, introduced by Rep. Sheryl Albers, attempts to resolve pet custody battles. If the parties cannot come to a mutual agreement, the bill would allow the courts to decide the pets' placement. However, the bill would prohibit the court from placing a pet with a party that has been served with a domestic abuse restraining order or injunction.

Both bills must be passed in the state senate and assembly and signed by the governor before becoming law.