

County law targets animal abusers

Vote to advance a registry of offenders in Albany County is applauded by public, lawmakers

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ALBANY -- County legislators unanimously passed a law Tuesday night establishing a registry of those convicted of abusing animals after lead sponsor [Bryan Clenahan](#) urged his colleagues to make Albany County "a real leader in the fight against animal abuse."

Local Law K, which sponsors call the toughest animal abuse legislation in the state, takes effect 90 days after being filed with the [Office of the Secretary](#) of State and will be available online. First-time offenders will appear on the registry for 10 years and will be prohibited from buying, adopting or otherwise taking possession of an animal during that time. A second offense would ban the person from having animals for life.

A roll call vote of the 35 members present was taken after the last item on the agenda was read by Legislature Clerk [Paul Devane](#). As members of the audience applauded the passage of what will be known as the Animal Abuse Registry Law, lawmakers enthusiastically joined in the clapping, an unusual move for the body to applaud passage of new laws.

During the public forum before the start of the meeting, several speakers encouraged a favorable vote, including [Brad Shear](#), executive director of the [Mohawk & Hudson River Humane Society](#).

The law comes at no cost to taxpayers, Shear said. Instead, fines levied on offenders will go toward maintaining the registry. Photos, as well as names, of those convicted of animal abuse will be on the registry, which will be maintained by the Mohawk & Hudson River Humane Society and overseen by the sheriff, Clenahan said.

The Guilderland Democrat cited a string of recent reports of animal abuse in Albany and surrounding counties, including the finding this week of a mother cat and three newly born kittens in a Dumpster in Nassau.

"We know that animal abusers are the same people who commit violent acts toward children and other innocent victims in our community," Clenahan said. "By taking a stronger approach to animal abuse, we are working to create a safer, more peaceful community for pets and people alike."

Shear said the registry "will help prevent abusers from finding new victims."

While the law is modeled after one established last year in Suffolk County, considered the nation's first such registry, Albany County's was made even tougher, Clenahan said.

Convicted animal abusers, 16 years and older, will be required to give their name, address and a photograph to sheriff's officials, along with an annual fee of \$50. Those who fail to register shall be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and/or a fine not to exceed \$1,000 for each day the offender fails to register.

Under the law, animal shelters, pet stores, breeders or individuals in Albany County wishing to sell a pet, have one adopted or transfer a pet must check first with the registry. Those violating that section of the law could be subject to a fine not to exceed \$5,000, unless the abuser failed to register and therefore the seller won't be held responsible.

Albany lawmaker [Brian Scavo](#) said the measure shows that "people in Albany County care." [Guilderland Democrat Mary Lou Connolly](#) said Albany must set an "example for all counties."

Albany Democrat Christopher Higgins called the legislation "one of the most important local laws passed this year." It could send "a message up the hill," he said, encouraging a statewide law.

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