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New York Senate Votes to Unleash Stronger Animal Protections

Sen. Martinez wins approval of anti-cruelty legislation targeting abuse and wildlife exploitation.

ALBANY, NY - The New York State Senate has passed a package of legislation to strengthen protections for the well-being of animals. Included were Senate Bills [S197](#) and [S252](#), sponsored by State Senator Monica R. Martinez, that give judges the discretion to order consecutive sentences when an individual is convicted of multiple counts of aggravated cruelty to animals and expands the definitions of wild and exotic animals to ensure these creatures will be protected from being imported, sold, or owned.

S197, also known as Tucker's Law, was originally introduced in 2020 following the arrest of a Long Island man for the beating deaths of two dogs and the injury of a third. The legislation was crafted in response to a limitation in state law that restricts a charge of aggravated cruelty to a definite sentence not exceeding two years in prison. The bill addresses this by granting judges discretion to impose consecutive sentences when an individual is convicted of multiple counts of aggravated cruelty to animals. Currently, the law caps sentences at up to two years, even for the most egregious acts.

S252 was filed in response to a Hauppauge pet store found to be selling various exotic animals. The shop also allegedly allowed visitors to purchase 30-minute sessions to pet, feed and interact with wild and exotic animals, including sloths and kangaroos. Under current law, selling or keeping these types of animals is not prohibited, but the shop was closed last year following court orders for alleged town code violations.

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“Today’s vote is a reminder that humanity’s laws have not always kept pace with the cruelty some individuals inflict on animals. The package of bills passed, including expansions of ‘Tucker’s Law’ and the ban on exotic animal sales, raises our standard of accountability toward our fellow beings. These proposals reflect our deeply held belief that compassion is a virtue that must be reflected in both our values and our laws. As cruelty to animals is often a precursor to future abuse against humans, this legislation not only protects animals but also affirms our commitment to ensuring both are treated with dignity and respect.”

In addition to the proposals passed as part of this package, Sen. Martinez is sponsoring the following animal protection bills under consideration this legislative session:

- **[S673](#) – Housing People and Animals Together Grant Program:** This bill creates a grant program to fund shelters and organizations that provide emergency housing and domestic violence shelters for both people and their companion animals, ensuring that no one has to choose between housing and their pet.
- **[S896](#) – Comprehensive Emergency Management Planning for Pets:** This bill requires New York’s emergency management plans to include provisions for animals, ensuring pets are not left behind during disasters and shelters, rescue operations, and veterinary care are accounted for.
- **[S1741](#) – Strengthening Penalties for Animal Abandonment:** This bill increases the minimum penalty for abandoning an animal, ensuring that those who leave pets behind face fines of at least \$500.
- **[S1742](#) – Increasing Penalties for Inadequate Shelter for Dogs:** This bill strengthens penalties for failing to provide proper shelter for dogs left outside in extreme weather, ensuring that neglect is met with consequences.
- **[S1743](#) – Granting SPCA Officers the Authority to Enforce Animal Cruelty Laws:** This bill grants SPCA peace officers the same authority as police officers to issue appearance tickets, summons, or arrests for violations of animal cruelty laws.