

Legislation Text

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Calling on the General Assembly to repeal the provisions of the Dog Law that limit the City's power to legislate with respect to dangerous dogs and that prohibit the enactment of "breed specific" ordinances.

WHEREAS, The Vicious Dog Task Force was formed as a result of a public hearing on Resolution No. 970803 that sought to further investigate the regulation and control of vicious and dangerous dogs in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, According to a report by Allegheny University of the Health Sciences, each year dog bites cause 4.5 million injuries, 20 deaths, 670 hospitalizations, 334,000 emergency room visits and \$102 million in medical bills. Further statistics reveal that boys with a median age of 15, and men, are more likely to be victims. It was further reported, and attested that attacks from dogs that are actually the pets of their victim or familiar to them, are on an alarming increase; and

WHEREAS, As found by the Task Force, the issue of vicious and dangerous dogs is a matter of vital concern, affecting the public health, safety and welfare of all Philadelphians. Considering the risk to large parts of the population, it is necessary that effective strategies include an examination of enforcement and preventative measures that have either not been enforced or are currently preempted by existing state legislation; and

WHEREAS, As also found by the Task Force, incidents in Philadelphia and across the United States have demonstrated that while most dogs make suitable pets, there are certain exceptionally dangerous and unpredictable dogs of various breeds that, once provoked, become uncontrollable and lethal weapons that pose significant dangers to unsuspecting and innocent people; and

WHEREAS, Article V-A, §507-A(c) of the Dog Law (3 P.S. §459-507-A(c)) abrogates local ordinances relating to dangerous dogs, and provides that local ordinances "otherwise dealing with dogs may not prohibit or otherwise limit a specific breed of dog"; and

WHEREAS, Because of Philadelphia's high population density and the large number of stray and vicious dogs in the City, especially pit bulls and related breeds, the dangerous dog problem in Philadelphia is different in kind and scope from that in other areas of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's special problem with dangerous dogs requires the enactment of local measures to supplement the protections afforded by the Dog Law, yet the Dog Law expressly prohibits the City from enacting the necessary legislation to fully protect its residents and visitors from dangerous dogs; now therefore

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Council of the City of Philadelphia hereby requests the General Assembly to repeal, at least with respect to cities of the first class, the provisions of the Dog Law that abrogate local ordinances relating to dangerous dogs and that restrict the enactment of ordinances that prohibit or otherwise limit specific breeds of dog.