



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Sue Wilson Beffort
67 Rainsdance Road
Sandia Park, New Mexico 87047

Re: Oppose Dog Breed-Specific Legislation

Dear Senator Beffort:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) writes on behalf of our 32 affiliated kennel clubs in New Mexico, as well as the thousands responsible dog owners in the state, to express our opposition to your proposed legislation that would restrict the ownership of specific breeds of dogs in the State of New Mexico.

The mission of the AKC is to advocate for dogs as family companions, to advance canine health and wellbeing, to protect the rights of all dog owners, and to educate the public about responsible dog ownership. We believe that *all* dog owners should be held accountable, regardless of the breed of dog they own. As such, we support laws that establish a fair process by which individual dogs (regardless of breed) are identified as “dangerous” based on stated, measurable actions and laws that impose appropriate penalties on owners of these dogs. This is more effective in protecting the safety of the community and the rights of responsible dog owners.

Dog ownership and exhibition has a tremendous impact on the New Mexico economy. In 2011 alone, over 130 AKC dog shows were held in the state with over 26,400 dogs participating from across the United States. These shows generate significant revenue for local businesses through venue rental, restaurants, lodging, and many other items. In addition, it is estimated that responsible purebred dog owners spend over \$6.2 million each year in New Mexico on veterinary care, grooming, and other basic dog needs. This proposal sends the clear message that responsible dog owners and lucrative, educational all-breed dog events are not welcome in the state.

As currently written, the proposal would exempt owners from compliance if their American Staffordshire Terriers or Staffordshire Bull Terriers are registered with the American Kennel Club. While we do appreciate this gesture, it unfortunately does not prevent situations where animal control officers may deem another dog to have physical characteristics similar to these breeds and therefore declare the dog “dangerous”, as required under this bill. It also does not protect those responsible dog owners who participate with mixed-breed dogs in our Canine Partners activities, those who may not be able to readily produce proof of registration, or those who may choose to not register their dogs. These dogs should not be summarily declared dangerous and their owners punished if they have never proven to be a problem.

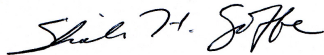
Breed-specific laws have been proven ineffective across the United States and around the world. These laws fail to address the underlying cause of dangerous dog issues – irresponsible ownership – and force animal control officers to become dog breed identification experts and to spend valuable time enforcing laws for specific breeds, rather than focusing on true animal problems in the community. Furthermore,

these laws arbitrarily punish law-abiding dog owners simply because of the breed of dog they own. For these and other reasons, breed-specific legislation is opposed by the American Kennel Club, the American Veterinary Medical Association, National Animal Control Association, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and a host of other respected national animal organizations who recognize the inequities and inherent fallacies of such law.

The AKC urges the New Mexico Legislature to focus on strong enforcement of laws that hold *all* dog owners accountable, regardless of the breed of dog they own. This is more effective in ensuring public safety while protecting the rights of responsible dog owners. We and our constituent responsible dog owners in New Mexico welcome the opportunity to work with you to develop reasonable, effective solutions that address your concerns without punishing the thousands of responsible dog owners in your state.

We respectfully ask you to not proceed with this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila H. Goffe".

Sheila Goffe
Director, Government Relations

Cc: The Honorable Susana Martinez, Governor, State of New Mexico

JLC