

Steps to Fighting Breed Specific Legislations

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Somewhere along the line, and I am still trying to figure out how this happened, I fell into becoming active in trying to halt Breed Specific Legislations (BSL). Since traveling is tough for me now, I do letter writing and contacting as many legislators as I can when I learn of a proposed BSL in a region. Between talking with others who are also involved with fighting BSL as well as my own experiences, I have developed a list of steps to help fight BSL (this is more for US folk but can be adapted anywhere):

1) Notify the big all breed registries - at least both the AKC and the UKC have departments to tackle BSL.

UKC: www.ukcdogs.com

AKC: www.akc.org

I am not sure if the ARBA has a specific BSL department at this time, but contact them anyway. American Rare Breed Association, www.arba.org

2) Contact the national breed clubs for each breed listed.

3) Contact local all breed clubs. Infodog.com has a great list of upcoming shows (all AKC but some clubs members also do UKC, ARBA, etc) by state and through it you can get lists and addresses for hosting clubs. This is easier than a general search of the Internet for lists of clubs. Also, go to various registries and look for local kennel clubs.

4) Organize a letter writing campaign and get information out to local newspapers, animal control, legislators, etc.

5) Do not use abusive language or call names. It undermines your credibility and gives ammunition to those who insist only thugs own these breeds. Be professional.

6) If possible, go and testify. Remember #5 and when you go, dress professionally as if you were going to give a lecture or presentation. Do *nothing* to fuel the fire of those who insist only tough guys own these breeds.

7) Get involved with the community and try to keep abreast of happenings. Sadly, many of us find out about breed legislation after it is too late to effectively get involved. It is amazing how quietly people will try and enact laws and the public may not know about it until too late.

8) Encourage broad based dog bite laws that cover all breeds or crosses and take in to consideration:

- Who owned the dog and under what conditions was it kept?
- Was the dog being used potentially as a weapon?
- Was the dog properly under control?
- Was the dog "justified" in the bite? (Like was the dog being teased or protecting property from intruders, was the dog injured - and note under protecting property, know your local laws.)
- Stiffer penalties for animal cruelty - most now are a slap on the wrist.
- If a dog is suspected of being used as a weapon or is being used to guard illegal trade, the owner will be charged as though he had a loaded gun.
- Mandatory leash laws with stiff fines for breaking them - many communities - even suburbs - do not have them. (There will be exceptions for working farm dogs and livestock protectors, etc.).
- Public education of breeds, safety around ALL dogs and what signs to look for if you suspect someone is using a dog for illegal things.

And of course, be the most responsible dog owner **you** can! Teach by example!