



# Taking Command

A publication of the AKC Government Relations Department



## What's New in Government Relations

The last month has been a busy and exciting time for AKC Government Relations. Nearly all state legislatures are in session or preparing to hold legislative sessions. The 118th U.S. Congress is in session, and many local communities are also actively considering new dog laws. We're pleased to share highlights of these actions and our activities throughout this newsletter.

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## U.S. Senate Update: AKC Lauds Introduction of Healthy Dog Importation Act to Protect Animal and Public Health

The American Kennel Club welcomes the introduction of the [Healthy Dog Importation Act of 2023](#) in the United States Senate.

AKC is grateful for the continuing and bipartisan leadership of Senators Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Tina Smith (D-Minn.) as lead sponsors of the bill and Jim Risch (R-Idaho), Raphael Warnock (D-Ga), Roger Marshall (R-Kan) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) as original sponsors. This measure and their leadership will go a long way to addressing concerns about recent documented incidents of unhealthy dogs being imported into the United States.

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## Welcome New GR Analyst Bob Rilling-Smith!

The American Kennel Club Government Relations department is pleased to welcome our newest staff member, Bob Rilling-Smith. Bob is the new Legislative Analyst/Community Outreach Coordinator for U.S. Western States including California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Montana, and Idaho.

In this role, he will be responsible for monitoring state and local legislation and regulations impacting dog ownership and advocating to support and protect the health, safety, and welfare of all dogs. Bob will be working closely with clubs and federations to coordinate events and increase community engagement at the grassroots level to advance purpose-bred dogs, encourage responsible dog ownership and protect the rights of dog owners.

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## AKC Hosts National Legislative Conference in Raleigh, NC

In January, AKC Government Relations held its first in-person legislative conference since the COVID outbreak. Approximately 50 legislative liaisons, federation leaders, AKC club members, trainers, dog owners and advocates from across the United States traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina, for the event.

The 2-day conference was designed to update attendees on trends in canine legislation and animal extremism; empower attendees with tools, resources, and information to be effective advocates for dogs in their local communities; and to promote networking and sharing of ideas and experiences.

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## Lawmakers Celebrate Dogs, Meet Breeders and Responsible Dog Owners at Meet the Breeds in NYC

More than two dozen lawmakers and legislative staff joined over 20,000 members of the general public at the Javits Center in New York City on January 28 and 29, to meet and play with over 130 different dog breeds in booths that depict each breed's country of origin, historical purpose, and function. Visitors were also able to view fun and entertaining demonstrations of dog sports and working dogs exhibiting their skills.

For more than a decade, AKC's Meet the Breeds has been a great opportunity for these lawmakers to see firsthand the overwhelming crowds who come out to see purebred dogs and to interact with constituent dog owners, enthusiasts, and breeders. This year, more than 85 tri-state lawmakers participated as Honorary Chairs for this event, and many came with staff and their families to meet the dogs and declare their public support for responsible pet ownership.

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## AKC Participates in Day at the Capitol with the Kansas Pet Professionals

Recently, AKC Government Relations staff member Jacob Hupp traveled to Topeka, Kansas to participate in the Kansas Pet Professionals (KPP) Day at the Capitol. AKC GR set up a booth at the event and distributed information to lawmakers and staff on the benefits of purebred dog breeders, the economic impact of dog events, and the good things AKC and its clubs do for the communities.

Lawmakers from districts throughout the Sunflower State stopped by the AKC table to discuss legislative issues. Prior to the event, Hupp visited legislative offices at the capitol to introduce himself and AKC to lawmakers.

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## Massachusetts Municipal Association Annual Meeting and Trade Show a Success

The Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) hosts an annual meeting and trade show where government leaders from across the state and representatives of companies that provide products and services to towns and cities gather for two days of informative workshops, interactive discussions, and networking opportunities. The American Kennel Club Government Relations Department (AKC GR) joined attendees on January 20 and 21, 2023, at the Hynes Convention Center.

The AKC GR exhibit booth featured materials showing how AKC is the recognized expert in promoting responsible dog ownership, training, and breeding.

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## Legislative Information and Updates

Linked below are some highlights of pending legislation impacting dog ownership and dog owners' rights across the country. For more information on these issues, and information on how you can get involved, visit the AKC GR Legislative Action Center at [www.akcgr.org](http://www.akcgr.org)

Visit the [2023 Legislation Tracking map](#) for the most up-to-date information on state and federal legislation. This site, updated each weekday, provides the latest bill text, status, and links to legislative alerts posted by the AKC.

In addition to tracking and responding to legislative proposals, AKC Government Relations addresses dog-related regulatory proposals from the U.S. federal government, all 50 states, and the District of Columbia. AKC GR's Regulatory Resource Center provides updates on [federal](#) and [state](#) regulatory issues that may impact dog owners.

Federal

Issues that may affect *all* dog owners in the U.S.

State

Issues specific to your state

Local

Issues at the city, county, and metropolitan levels, and in U.S. territories

Regulatory

Regulatory issues at the federal, state, and local levels

Please contact AKC GR at (919) 816-3720 or [doglaw@akc.org](mailto:doglaw@akc.org) for more information or to let us know what's happening in your local community.

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