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## **Washington Alliance for Humane Legislation**

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### **Governor Signs Bill to Protect Animals from Cruelty and Abuse**

Governor Christine Gregoire signed legislation that will help protect animals across Washington. S.S.B. 5065, sponsored by Senator Mike Carrell (R-28), received strong bipartisan support. It passed by a vote of 47-0 in the senate and 93-2 in the house.

“My bill corrects gaps in existing law that allow people convicted of animal cruelty to easily become repeat offenders,” Carrell said. “As an animal lover myself, I am very pleased to see this bill enacted. It will be an important tool to help prevent the horrific cases of ongoing animal abuse.”

Under current law, certain people convicted of animal cruelty are prohibited from owning or caring for similar animals for either two years or permanently, depending upon the severity of their crime. However, the prohibition applies only to people who have had their own animals seized by animal control officers, where the animals were subsequently ordered forfeited by the court. S.S. B. 5065 expands the prohibition to offer greater protection of animals from repeat offenders. Under the new law, every person convicted of first or second degree animal cruelty will be prohibited from owning, caring for, or residing with similar animals for a two-year period or permanently. The bill also puts teeth in the prohibition. It creates civil and criminal penalties that can be applied to anyone convicted of animal cruelty who violates the ban on owning, caring for, or residing with similar animals.

To offer greater protection of animals and simplify compliance and enforcement of the law, the bill also broadens the definition of “similar” animals. For instance, under existing law, cats and dogs are not defined as “similar” animals, despite the fact that they are both household pets, often reside together, and both may be subjected to abuse by a person convicted of animal cruelty. S.S. B. 5065 corrects this discrepancy to ensure that cats and dogs receive protection as “similar” animals. It broadens the definition to afford greater protection to other animals as well.

Finally, the bill steps up the penalties for second degree animal cruelty. Under existing law, second degree animal cruelty is either a misdemeanor or gross misdemeanor, depending upon the nature of the crime. Under S.S. B. 5065, all forms of second degree animal cruelty become punishable as gross misdemeanors. Misdemeanors are punishable by up to 90 days in jail, up to a \$1,000 fine, or both. Gross misdemeanors are punishable by up to one year in jail, up to a \$5,000 fine, or both.

*The mission of the Washington Alliance for Humane Legislation is to promote the passage and effective implementation of humane animal welfare laws, regulations, and policies in Washington State and to educate the public about animal welfare issues.*