

Support the Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act (H.R. 5267)

Protect Victims of Domestic Violence and their Pets

The Pet and Women Safety Act was introduced in the House by Reps. Katherine Clark (D-MA) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL).

What will H.R. 5267 do?

The PAWS Act will expand the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to include protections for pets of domestic violence victims and provide much needed help to ensure that survivors and their pets can remain out of harm's way. Specifically, the PAWS Act expands VAWA's interstate stalking provisions to make crossing state lines to injure pets an offense punishable by up to five years in prison. The bill makes veterinary costs eligible for restitution by victims and authorizes a grant program to provide help and housing to victims and their at-risk pets. Additionally, the legislation expresses the sense of Congress that states should include pets in protective orders.

Why is H.R. 5267 necessary?

The link between animal cruelty and domestic violence is well documented. Many abusers threaten or commit violence against pets as a means to inflict further psychological harm to their victims. According to a national survey of family violence shelters, 71 percent of battered women reported that their abusers had also harmed, killed, or threatened their pets. Furthermore, victims of domestic violence often remain in or return to dangerous relationships to protect their pets. Abuse victims frequently resist seeking shelter out of fear for the safety of the pets they must leave behind.

Twenty-seven states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have enacted laws that include provisions for household pets in domestic violence protection orders. As important as these state laws are, domestic violence doesn't stop at the

state line. Federal protections complement and maximize state efforts to keep victims and their pets safe. The PAWS Act will enable victims to escape abusive situations and seek shelter, across state lines if necessary, without fear of violence against the pets they would be forced to abandon or leave behind with an abuser.

Who supports H.R. 5267?

In addition to the ASPCA, the PAWS Act is supported by leading domestic violence and animal welfare advocates: The National Network to End Domestic Violence, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Humane Society of the United States, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, the National Link Coalition, the Sheltering Animals & Families Together Program, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, the Animal Welfare Institute, and RedRover.

