

## Help Extract Animals from Red Tape (HEART) Act (H.R. 398)

### Ensure the Swift Disposition of Animals Rescued from Animal Fighting

The Help Extract Animals from Red Tape (HEART) Act was introduced in the House by Reps. John Katko (R-NY), Judy Chu (D-CA), Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), and Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX).

#### What will the HEART Act do?

The HEART Act will expedite the disposition process for animals seized in federal animal fighting cases and ensures the financial responsibility for the cost of the animals' care. This legislation will require claimants to reimburse the costs of caring for animals seized in federal animal fighting cases when the Government prevails in civil forfeiture proceedings.

It will prevent unnecessary delays in the rehoming and rehabilitation of these animals by reducing from 60 days to 30 days the time period the government has to notify interested parties following the seizure of animals. It will also allow courts to take into account the animals' welfare when considering further delays.

#### Why is the HEART Act Necessary?

The status quo for animals seized in federal animal fighting cases poses two major threats to animal

welfare. First, the significant length of time animals must be held before courts determine their disposition can result in serious physical and behavioral deterioration due to chronic stress, even when shelters provide high quality care. Second, the astronomical cost of sheltering seized animals for long periods depletes the financial resources of animal protection agencies and local shelters. The uncertainty of who is ultimately responsible for the cost of care for the seized animals discourages future animal fighting investigations, which means fewer animals saved.

In August 2013, the ASPCA, at the request of the U.S. Attorney's Office and the F.B.I., helped rescue nearly 400 dogs in one of the largest federal dog fighting raids in U.S. history. These dogs endured extreme cruelty. Tethered with heavy chains in the summer heat without food or water, severely wounded and scarred from fighting, these dogs suffered in desperate need of veterinary care for injuries and neglect. While many of these dogs now enjoy happy lives in loving homes, far too many of them spent more than a year entangled in legal limbo and red tape.



### Bam Bam's Story

Bam Bam was two weeks old when the ASPCA rescued her from an Alabama dog fighting yard as part of a multi-state federal dog fighting ring bust. Once removed from a future of abuse and suffering, Bam Bam was brought to a temporary shelter. While there, ASPCA behaviorists and caretakers provided Bam Bam with food, shelter, veterinary care, and socialization. When she was three months old, Bam Bam was transferred to the Humane Society of Calvert County, where she was fostered until adoption. Because of the timely disposition, the certainty about the cost of her care, and the time and resources spent by animal rescuers and rehabilitators, Bam Bam now lives happily in a loving home in Maryland. The HEART Act will ensure that every animal rescued in a federal animal fighting raid will have an expedited disposition process and that the financial responsibility for its care is met.