Testimony Before

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

Regarding House Bill 1463, Increase of Dog License Fees

September 27, 2017

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Presentor: Mr. John Gibble, Duncannon, Pennsylvania

Representing the Northeast Beagle Gundog Federation, an Association including more than 40 clubs recognized by the American Kennel Club, promoting hunting with dogs, habitat conservation, and organized field trials. Mr. Gibble is a former member of the Commonwealth’s Dog Law Advisory Board, a frequent commentator on legislative issues affecting hunting dogs, and President of the Elizabethtown Beagle Club.

1. License Fee Increase
2. The majority of license purchasers do not benefit from the services of the Bureau of Dog Law.
3. The Bureau’s website reports 50 to 100 stray dogs picked up each month, translated to about 900 per year. There were 966,198 individual dog licenses sold last year. The chance of my dog being picked up by a dog warden is less than 1 in 1,000. In several counties, there have been no dogs picked up by wardens over the past couple of years.
4. A large part of the Bureau’s time is consumed with 5,064 inspections of 2,340 licensed kennels, having nothing to do with individual license purchasers.
5. The Bureau brought in $414,900 from kennel licenses in 2016.
6. 405 “non-profit” kennels paid $25 or a total of $10,125 and received at least 876 inspections. Only 83 of these 405 non-profit kennels accept dogs seized and impounded by the Bureau.
7. **The fees for kennel licenses should be commensurate with the expenses incurred through administration and inspections. The burden for these expenses should not be placed on individual dog license purchasers.**
8. An attack by a registered dangerous dog on two children in Lancaster this June highlights the need for better enforcement of dangerous dog laws. Currently, an annual registration fee of $500 is assessed to owners of dangerous dogs. This fee should be increased to cover the cost of administration and monitoring compliance.
9. License Mechanics
10. Consideration of fee increases should remain a legislative issue to ensure public involvement through elected representatives. Legislative oversight ensures the Bureau performs as mandated.
11. The current system is outdated and complicated. Vendors change from year to year; many veterinarians are no longer selling dog licenses. Some years dog licenses have not been available until after the New Year.
12. A universal fee, rather than discounts for altered dogs, senior citizens, and the disabled would simplify collections and payments.
13. A bill authorizing a contract with a private vendor should include basic performance criteria to avoid the problems encountered with other vendors, such as lost licenses, inaccurate data entry, difficulties printing licenses or receipts, and non-existent customer service.
14. **There is real concern with the security of data collected by a private vendor and who can access that data. It would be simple enough to identify the owners of multiple hunting dogs to target them for theft or vandalism.**
15. Opportunities
16. **There are a number of creative programs using dog license dollars being implemented across the country including funding for rabies and other vaccination clinics, development of dog parks, pet owner education, and other recreational projects that benefit dog owners. Opening this discussion on dog licenses creates an opportunity to explore additional support.**
17. Hobby breeders, and owners of hunting and sporting dog kennels could benefit from adding an additional kennel class for 10 to 30 dogs with limited inspections.