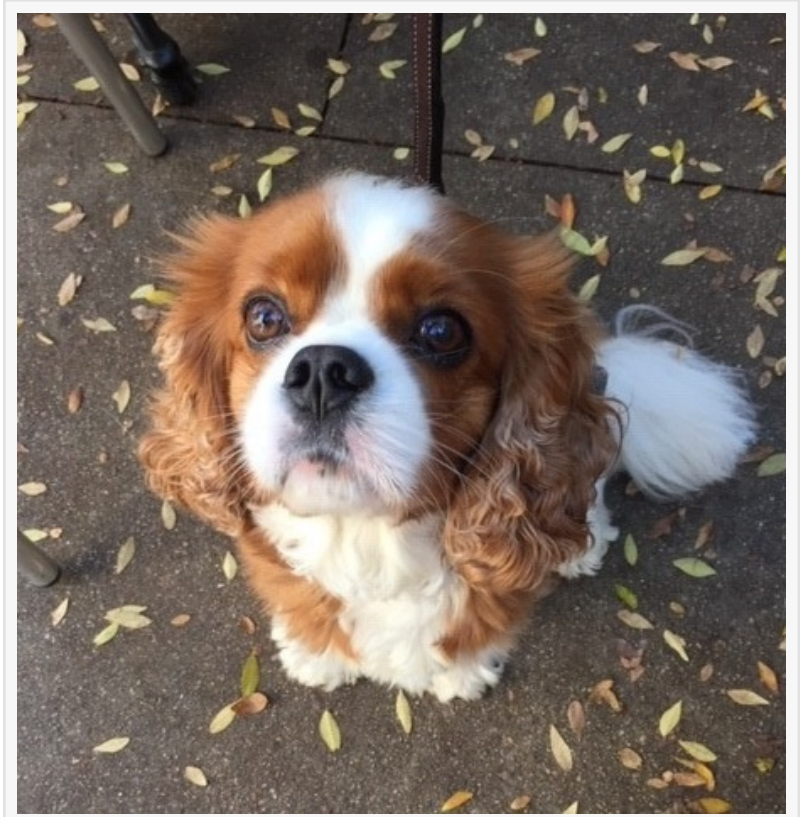


# U.S. House Passes PACT Act to Make Malicious Animal Cruelty a Felony

*Senate passed PACT in prior Congresses, so Animal Wellness and law enforcement agencies optimistic about enactment*

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, October 23, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Tuesday evening, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act, [H.R. 724](#), by a voice vote. The measure would establish a federal anti-cruelty statute, filling a hole in our legal framework to protect animals. The legislation has been heavily lobbied and advocated for by members of the Animal Wellness Foundation and Animal Wellness Action team for years. The measure would make it a federal crime to torture an animal "in the special maritime time and territorial jurisdiction of the United States" and in cases where acts of intentional cruelty affect interstate or foreign commerce.



"Most people are shocked to know that the U.S. does not have a federal animal cruelty law," said Holly Gann, Director of Federal Affairs at Animal Wellness Action. "Enacting this bill sends a signal that our nation has no tolerance for intentional cruelty toward animals."

"A society should be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable," said Drew Edmondson, former Oklahoma Attorney General and co-chair of the Animal Wellness Law Enforcement Council. "Prevention of animal cruelty and torture will help define us as a society and it is altogether fitting that Congress make this a national priority. The PACT Act complements state and territorial anti-cruelty laws, just as the federal government's ban on staged animal fighting fortifies state-based anti-dogfighting and anti-cockfighting laws."

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*Drew Edmondson, former Oklahoma Attorney General*

"Our animal friends and companions do not deserve to be tortured and killed for the amusement of sick and twisted individuals and we support the effort to criminalize these activities," said Patrick Yoes, National President, Fraternal Order of Police.

"Today's vote is a significant milestone in the bipartisan quest to end animal abuse and protect our pets," said U.S. Rep. Ted Deutch. "This bill sends a clear message that our society does not accept cruelty against animals. We've received support from so many Americans from across the

country and across the political spectrum. Animal rights activists have stood up for living things that do not have a voice. Law enforcement officers have sought a federal overlay to help them stop animal abusers who are likely to commit acts of violence against people. And animal lovers everywhere know this is simply the right thing to do. I'm deeply thankful for all of the advocates who helped us pass this bill, and I look forward to the Senate's swift passage and the President's signature."

"The torture of innocent animals is abhorrent and should be punished to the fullest extent of the law," said U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan. "Passing the PACT Act sends a strong message that this behavior will not be tolerated. Protecting animals from cruelty is a top priority for me and I will continue to work with Congressman Deutch to get this important bill signed into law."

The PACT Act, led by U.S. Reps. Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Vern Buchanan (R-FL), would prohibit extreme acts of cruelty when they occur in interstate commerce or on federal property and cracks down on widespread sexual abuse of animals (bestiality). While current federal law bans the sale of videos showing illegal acts of cruelty, it does not prohibit the underlying conduct. Law enforcement agencies across the country, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the Animal Wellness National Law Enforcement Council, have endorsed the PACT Act because of the well-documented connection between animal cruelty and violence against people, including the distinct correlation between sexual abuse of animals and children.

The Senate companion bill, S. 479, with 38 cosponsors and led by U.S. Sens. Pat Toomey (R-PA) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), previously passed the Senate by unanimous consent in the 114th and 115th Congress. But it was blocked in the House by former House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) despite the overwhelming bipartisan support. The current chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Rep. Jerold Nadler (D-NY), is a cosponsor of the legislation.

Animal Wellness Action and the Animal Wellness Foundation have treated movement of the PACT Act in Congress among its top priorities on Capitol Hill. The bill recently obtained 290 cosponsors in the House, triggering its placement on the "Consensus Calendar" and expedited action on the House floor. (The House Problems Solvers Caucus negotiated the terms of the provision to allow broadly supported, bipartisan bills a pathway for floor action). The PACT Act is the second animal protection bill to hit the 290 mark this year, and one of only nine in the 116th Congress out of over 4,500 bills that have been introduced.

"Opposition to cruelty to animals is a shared value in our nation," added Wayne Pacelle, founder of Animal Wellness Action. "By stopping it, we protect innocent animals and we make our communities safer and stronger." The organizations now urge the U.S. Senate to swiftly bring the bill up for passage to send to the President.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

Animal Wellness Action (Action) is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our

issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

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