

We, the undersigned residents of the State Of Texas, 18 years of age and over, are in vehement opposition to the introduction, passage, or implementation of state legislation at the 81st, or any future state Legislative Sessions, which would permit local municipalities to enact regulations to prohibit the ownership, harboring, maintenance, transportation, or the sale of breeds of specific dogs within any given municipality within the State of Texas.

We stand opposed to the repeal of current legislation which now prohibits breed specific regulations by home rule municipalities and local municipalities.

The State of Texas currently prohibits by statutory restriction the local regulations of breed specific restrictions under:

§ 822.047. LOCAL REGULATION OF DANGEROUS DOGS.

A county or municipality may place additional requirements or restrictions on dangerous dogs if the requirements or restrictions:

- (1) Are not specific to one breed or several breeds of dogs; and
- (2) are more stringent than restrictions provided by this subchapter.

Added by Acts 1991, 72nd Leg., ch. 916, § 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1991.

We, the undersigned residents of the State Of Texas, while having great sympathy for dog bite and dog attack victims do not believe that dog attack incidences would be lessened by the enactment of breed specific legislation. Furthermore, we believe that Texas' citizens' safety interests would better be served if municipalities would enforce the current dangerous dog laws now in place rather than attempting to enact costly and discriminatory legislation aimed at particular breeds and types of dogs based solely upon the genetic make up of those breeds, far better than breed-specific bans are strict laws to control aggressive dogs of any breed or mix. Generic vicious dog laws place restrictions on the ownership of dogs that pose a danger to people, restrictions such as confinement in locked, escape-proof kennels while outdoors on the owner's property; muzzles when the dog is off the property; and the purchase of a liability insurance policy.

We, the undersigned residents of the State Of Texas, oppose BSL - laws that ban, or severely restrict ownership of particular breeds; usually 'pit bulls', (a type of dog, not a breed), and sometimes Rottweilers, German Shepherds, Akitas, Dobermans, Chow Chows, and other breeds.

Breed bans do not work. They target all dogs of a breed, or type -- the innocent as well as the guilty. Breed bans are difficult to enforce; and they do not end the use of dogs by criminals. If 'pit bulls' in their various incarnations are banned, drug dealers and other felons will simply switch to another breed or, mix to use to protect their illegal activities. In the meantime, the ill-tempered mix breed that bites the hand that feeds it and the poorly-bred purebred that attacks the neighborhood children pose a far greater danger to people than the obedience-trained American Staffordshire Terrier, or American Pit Bull Terrier. Many of which are registered therapy dogs, have earned a CGC (Canine Good Citizen certificate issued by the AKC, American Kennel Club) and/or passed the American Temperament Testing Society's temperament test, which 84.3% of tested American Pit Bull Terriers pass and 83.4% of American Staffordshire Terriers pass (see www.atts.org for more information). With breed specific legislation, even dogs that have proven to be temperamentally sound and well-behaved companions cannot step foot inside the city, or are severely restricted within the city simply because of their physical appearance and not due to any history of aggression or, other dangerous behaviors.

We, the undersigned residents of the State Of Texas, respectfully submit to you that Breed Specific Legislation is not the answer and it does not work. We oppose breed specific legislation.

Breed specific ordinances are quick fixes and are not a sufficient long term solution for the following reasons:

1. Dog problems are generally problems with owner responsibility and are not limited to breeds. When breeds are singled out as dangerous or vicious, responsibility is removed from the dog owner which is where it belongs. Irresponsible people are also less likely to follow the law - and as a result, everyone has to suffer.

2. By communities limiting the ability of citizens to own certain breeds, responsible law abiding citizens will shy away from those communities. These are the types of owners that communities need to encourage, not drive away.

3. Communities that have instituted such bans often find that the irresponsible owners and the criminals who use dogs for illegal purposes simply switch to another breed.

4. Breeds and mixes are hard to identify and often dogs are mislabeled and destroyed based on paranoia and prejudice alone. This also punishes those dogs that are good canine citizens. Many breeds function as assistance dogs for handicapped owners, search and rescue dogs, drug-sniffing dogs, police dogs, etc. and BSL drives them out of the community. The American Veterinary Medical Association as well as the Centers for Disease Control, The Humane Society of the United States, The National Canine Research Council, National Animal Interest Alliance, ASPCA, American Kennel Club, American Canine Foundation, United Kennel Club, American Dog Owners Association, Association of Pet Dog Trainers, and several state veterinary medical associations also oppose breed-specific legislation:

<http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/nov00/s111500c.asp>
http://www.avma.org/public_health/dogbite/dogbite.pdf
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/dogbreeds.pdf>
http://www.hsus.org/pets/issues_affecting_our_pets/dangerous_dogs.html
<http://www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/>
http://www.naiaonline.org/about/policy_petscomm.htm#breed
http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pp_breedban
https://www.akc.org/canine_legislation/position_statements.cfm#dangerousdog
<http://www.americancaninefoundationlaw.com/breedspecificlegislation.html>
<http://www.ukcdogs.com/WebSite.nsf/WebPages/ComPunishDeeds>
http://www.adoa.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=79&Itemid=44
http://www.apdt.com/about/ps/breed_specific_legis.aspx
<http://www.forpitsake.org/BSLPositionStatements.pdf>

5. The dog most restricted is the "pit bull." A pit bull is a type of dog and not a recognized breed of dog. 'Pit Bull' is a generic term that was originally used as an abbreviation for American Pit Bull Terrier but is now an umbrella term for upwards of 22 different and distinct dog breeds that share similar physical characteristics.

6. Passage of laws that are only enforced through complaints cause two problems:

- 1) They create disrespect for the law if authorities require compliance only upon complaint, and
- 2) They provide ammunition for neighborhood feuds.

7. Breed-specific laws increase costs for communities. Shelter costs for communities would rise as citizens abandon targeted breeds and adoptable dogs of the targeted breeds would be euthanized at shelters. Court costs arise when citizens challenge the law. There will be additional costs for the communities due to caring for targeted dogs taken from citizens; veterinary costs, food costs, etc. Additionally, increased payroll costs for enforcing these laws and caring for the dogs which are targeted.

We, the undersigned residents of the State Of Texas propose alternatives to breed bans including, but not limited to:

1. Stronger enforcement of existing dangerous dog laws. This is a broad based effort that protects all citizens as any dog can bite and be a nuisance when owned by an irresponsible owner.

2. Create a strict and expensive fine structure for chase incidents and bite incidents. Those who would deliberately train a dog to act aggressively towards humans or, allow dogs in their care to purposefully attack, harm, or maim humans and/or use dogs in the commission of a felony or, misdemeanor should face additional penalties including jail and/or prison time.

3. Encourage and explore ways to fund local animal rescue and welfare agencies to provide responsible dog ownership seminars and canine safety education. The American Kennel Club has a free education program created for elementary school children.

4. Protect the rights and safety of all citizens by enforcing nuisance ordinances such as anti-barking, fecal removal regulations, and leash laws.

5. Punish the deed - not the breed. Do not take away the rights of law abiding responsible owners by allowing any municipality, or community to dictate what breed of dog they can, or cannot own in that municipality, or community.

Respectfully yours,