



NON-ECONOMIC DAMAGES FOR LOSS OF A PET BEING CONSIDERED IN VERMONT

The Issue:

Companion legislation has been introduced in Vermont proposing non-economic damages for the loss of pets. [House Bill 256](#) and [Senate Bill 51](#), would allow for the owner of a deceased pet to collect non-economic damages for emotional distress from the loss of a pet.

The Impact:

These bills state that “any person who intentionally kills a pet belonging to another person without first obtaining legal authority or consent of the owner shall be liable to the deceased pet’s owner for non-economic damages for emotional distress resulting from the loss of the reasonably expected companionship, love, and affection of the pet.”

The bills define a "pet" as “any domesticated dog or cat normally maintained in or near the household of its owner.”

If passed, the legislation will take effect on July 1, 2011.

PIJAC Position:

PIJAC consistently opposes legislation that would grant non-economic damages to pet owners. Such measures can subject breeders, pet product manufacturers, retailers, veterinarians and others to excessive claims and would raise the cost of companion animals for the public. Allowing for these types of damages could result in remedies that are not even available in most incidents for human loss.

Recommended Action:

Senate Bill 51 has been assigned to the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#), but has yet set to be set for a hearing. House Bill 256 is in the [House Judiciary Committee](#) and also awaits its first committee hearing. Those interested in or affected by this legislation should contact members of the committees ([Representatives](#) & [Senators](#)) to voice their concerns.

Check the [Breaking News page](#) of the PIJAC website often for updates on this and many other bills.

If you have any additional questions or concerns please contact PIJAC’s Bambi Nicole Osborne at 202-452-1525, ext. 105 or via email at bambi@pijac.org.