



# BILL CREATES NON-ECONOMIC DAMAGES FOR PETS IN VERMONT

## The Issue:

Pending Vermont legislation would establish an unprecedented cause of action in the state permitting pet owners to recover non-economic damages for emotional distress in the death of their pet. [Senate Bill 240](#) proposes a form of damages that is historically available only in limited circumstances.

## The Impact:

Under the proposed bill, any person who intentionally or “recklessly” causes the death of a domestic pet maybe held liable by the court for non-economic damages to the pet’s owner. If SB 240 is enacted, a pet owner will be able to recover noneconomic damages for emotional distress resulting from the loss of the reasonably expected companionship, love, and affection of a domestic pet. Legislation such as this could lead to liability for breeders, pet stores, veterinarians, product manufacturers and anyone else who might be assigned blame in the death of a pet, and would inevitably drive up the costs of pet ownership for everyone.

## 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 240](#) has been placed in the Senate Judiciary Committee, though not yet set for hearing. Persons interested in preserving the right to pet ownership are encouraged to contact members of the committee to voice their opposition to this measure:

[Dick Sears \(Chair\)](#) 802/442-9139

[Alice W. Nitka \(Vice Chair\)](#) 802/228-8432

[Diane Snelling \(Clerk\)](#) 802/482-4382

[Ann Cummings](#) 802/223-6043

[Jeanette White](#) 802/387-4379

PIJAC will publish an updated *PetAlert* when the bill is set for hearing or in case of other change in status. Check the [“Breaking News” page](#) of the PIJAC website for additional information. Should you have further questions or concerns, feel free to contact PIJAC’s Bambi Nicole Osborne at 202-452-1525, ext. 105 or via email at [Bambi@pijac.org](mailto:Bambi@pijac.org).

