

Good afternoon everybody, and thank you to Senator Argall and Senator Alloway for inviting me today. My name is Mary Withrow, I am the Director of Government Relations for the Western PA Humane Society in Pittsburgh. I am also an Animal Rescue Volunteer for The Humane Society of the United States. I was asked to speak about tethering today, a topic that I have done much research on and have most recently worked with Councilwoman Darlene Harris in Pittsburgh in passing the anti-tethering ordinance in Pittsburgh.

I will tell you first of all, that while severe weather is a part of this legislation and that's very important but please remember that it is also about a safer community, less calls to Animal Control and similar services thereby making it a positive fiscal issue, and an opportunity to educate pet owners thereby increasing the likelihood of pets remaining in a home.

How does it make for a safer community?

- According to the **Center for Disease Control**:
 - 1 in 4 dog bites are the result of a chained dog.
 - Chained dogs are 3 times more likely to bite
 - Dogs most likely to attack are tethered un-neutered males
 - Children are more likely to be bitten by a chained dog as they are the ones who may stumble into a backyard to retrieve a ball for example or to visit a friend and find themselves up against a tethered dog
 - On average over 50 children are killed annually by a chained/tethered dog
- According to the **American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)**:
 - chained/tethered dogs rarely receive sufficient veterinary care, suffer from flea and tick infestation, are more at risk for heartworm and a magnitude of other parasites. receive no exercise and are more likely to have overturned water bowls and sporadic feedings
 - They spend their entire life eating, sleeping, defecating and urinating in a single confined area
 - The AVMA has come out publicly against dog tethering. In a recent press release they stated "Never tether or chain your dog because this can contribute to aggressive behavior."
- As stated by the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**:
 - "Our experience in enforcing the Animal Welfare Act has led us to conclude that continuous confinement of dogs by a tether is inhumane. It restricts a dog's movement, a tether can be tangled around or hooked on the dog's shelter structure or other objects, further restricting the dog's movement and potentially causing injury or death. In 1997 the USDA ruled that "people and organizations regulated by the Animal Welfare Act cannot keep dogs continuously chained."
- As stated by the **Association of Shelter Veterinarians' Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters**: Tethering is an unacceptable method of confinement for any animal and has no place in humane sheltering. Constant tethering of dogs in lieu of a primary enclosure is not a humane practice. Dogs tethered for long periods can become highly aggressive."
- From the **Humane Society of the United States**

- “Dogs have been bred for thousands of years to form a strong attachment to a human family. An otherwise friendly and happy dog, when kept continually chained and isolated, often becomes neurotic, unhappy, anxious and aggressive. Jurisdictions that have prohibited permanent tethering have experienced safer communities for both people and pets.”

I have had the chance to work with the city of Pittsburgh Animal Care & Control in not only implementing the ordinance but also following up on enforcement and how it's working or not working. I have spoken to Philadelphia Animal Control, Councilman Brad Koplinski who legislated the Harrisburg ordinance and they all give the same basic report. They know who the "repeat offenders" are, and even much to their surprise the dogs are not outside at least in severe weather. They have had success in knocking at doors and explaining there will be a citation if the dog isn't brought in. Those they didn't comply or were not home had their dogs are seized. In Pittsburgh of 4 seized, 3 were surrendered right away to the shelter - the other was an accidental one - a dog walker let the dog out for spotty break and forgot. It was -2 degrees that day, this was a pug; the dog would not have survived. Without the ordinance they would not have been able to seize the dog. Realizing that a large part of the population really does not know that tethering dogs is not appropriate care, we added an amendment to the City of Pittsburgh ordinance that in each call that is about tethering, dogs in severe weather or any other calls the officers deliver information about proper pet care, information about the free spay/neuter program in the city of Pittsburgh as well as vaccine and licensing information. I do have one recommendation from a few of the officers, they feel the 1/8" size for tether is not adequate for many breeds who are more likely to be tethered. (Rottweilers, pit bulls, and other large breed dogs)

There are many parts of PA where enforcement may be a struggle, over the years PA has lost manpower in mainly rural areas creating the issue of if law enforcement seizes a dog where do they take them? Kathy Watson (HB 502) and Charles McIlheney (SB573) have proposed legislation that could help solve that. The Dog Law Restricted Account (DLRA) is limited to a \$69k balance. Dog licensing (the cash cow) citation, and kennel fees generate revenue approximately \$208,000 annually. (\$4.5 million from 1998 – 2013. \$3.3 million was forfeited to the judicial computer account). The proposed legislation would keep that \$\$ where it belongs - in the DLRA restricted account to be used for those areas in need of possibly a dog warden, humane police officer who could assist in enforcement.

In closing, I want to say I support a ban on tethering of dogs 100%, I have seen frozen dogs brought into the shelter already deceased, dogs with severe hyperthermia near death, sometimes taking 3-4 hours before a temp of over 60 degrees is reached on a digital thermometer. Dogs with severe hypothermia chained in the heat with a body temp of 110 and I have seen multiple dogs with neck wounds so deep from an inappropriate collar or tether that it can take months to heal. And one dog I will never forget was a 10 month old retriever brought into the shelter who died by strangulation when his tether got stuck on a chain link fence.