

A Voice for All Dogs: Speaking Up for Bully Breeds

By Hannah Trezise

In the United States and specifically in Michigan, many towns, cities and municipalities have restrictions on dangerous or “vicious” dog breeds. Breed Specific Legislation typically attempts to curb the amount of Pit Bulls in a region, as Pit Bulls are unjustly considered the most violent dog breed of modern day. This involves banning the breed completely within a city or region. For example, in Alma, Michigan Ordinance no. 761 was passed in 2014 that completely banned any animals of the Pit Bull categorization. Sometimes, legislation even tries to limit the number of animals from bully breeds such as Bulldogs, Mastiffs, Boston Terriers and Boxers. Responsible Pitbull or Bully owners are being forced to give away their dogs or euthanize them when Breed Specific Legislation is enacted, and it is devastating for those owners and the families in which the dogs lived.



Correcting Misconceptions

Having grown up in a family that owned both Pitbulls and Boxers, Breed Specific Legislation would have certainly affected my life. Seen to the left, as a toddler I was certainly comfortable interacting with our large Bully Breed dogs.



Since I began educating myself on the reasoning for Breed Specific Legislation, I have made it my priority to fight for animals like Pit Bulls who do not have a voice in their own politics. To date, I have been educated through a community shelter to understand how affectionate any animal can be with the right ownership; Pit Bulls and Bully Breeds are no different. While many people understand this, there is still

hesitation about being around a well-trained animal of the Pit Bull or Bully Breed categorization.

The misconception that the animal’s jaws lock causes many to believe that they are

predestined for aggressive, fatal behaviour. Once, these dogs were considered “nanny” dogs, and a Pit Bull was the beloved pet of Helen Keller. With focus being drawn to their use in dogfighting and their prevalence in data on dog attacks, fallacies run rampant and Pit Bulls and Bully Breeds are villainized when they are the victims.

Pit Bulls also typically score higher on temperament tests than other dogs not considered dangerous. 86.6% of Pit Bulls pass their temperament tests according to American Temperament Test Society Inc. This ranks the breed fourth highest in the temperament testing spectrum, scoring similarly to Golden Retrievers and various other family-friendly breeds. This information, unfortunately, falls on deaf ears as people rely on the information that the media spreads on dog attacks and fatal encounters with Pit Bulls. Instead, the media could report on the immensely positive results of rehabilitating the dogs involved in massive dogfighting operations; nearly all of the dogs belonging to Michael Vick, NFL quarterback and infamous dog fighting criminal, were able to become loving pets and find homes.

What You Can Do

Take action and contact local legislators! Many legislators’ phone or email contacts are listed online and can be readily accessed by concerned citizens. In the last year, various towns and cities in Michigan have contemplated breed banning or breed restrictions specific to dangerous dog breeds such as Pit Bulls or Bully Breeds. Waterford Township is one of many that has enacted breed specific legislation. However, because of the amount of pushback that the legislation received, the regulations of the bill were eased, and vets are now allowed to decide the breed of the individual dog. This experience portrays the incredible need to continue participation in pushback against these types of legislation, as pushback has obviously made a difference.



It is also important to repeal existing Breed Banning laws in favor of legislation that promotes the education and proper licensing and screening of dog owners. Adopting or buying a dog should have restrictions and requirements similar to that of adopting a child. If one is not suitable to adopt and raise a child, why would that person be capable of raising a dog, which has similar requirements and lots of training.

Dog ownership training would also affect the dog breeding market for Pit Bulls, which would benefit the species overall. So many dogs are sold by breeders and Puppy Mills, but there are also many dogs left in shelters. Making the restrictions and requirements to own a dog more strict would eliminate a lot of the situations in which people buy a dog, realize they don't want it or cannot take care of it, and send it to the shelter; passionate and committed individuals would be those licensed and approved to own a dog.

Steps Involved:

1. Contact local legislators by phone or email
2. Draft a letter in which concerns are expressed and facts are addressed.
3. Demand stricter repercussions and convictions for animal abuse
4. Demand owner education programs across state to prepare a potential dog owner for his or her pet.