

# BREAKING NEWS

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## State rep: Law would crack down on puppy mills

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Animal welfare activists and State Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago) met this morning at an animal shelter in Lincoln Park to announce a proposed law aimed at cracking down on abusive puppy mills.



Chloe, a 6-month-old cocker spaniel rescued from a puppy mill, gets a snuggle from State Rep. John Fritchey as she is held by Paige Vogelzang, 8, of Decatur. (Tribune / Chuck Berman)

The bill, sponsored by Fritchey and State Sen. Dan Kotowski (D-Mount Prospect) and backed by the Humane Society of the United States and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, is called Chloe's Bill after a young female dog named Chloe who was rescued from a filthy, unlicensed puppy mill in downstate Macon County.

"This isn't something that should be considered radical," Fritchey said. "It's decent."

Fritchey said opposition to the bill may be inevitable, but that he'd have concerns about any dog breeder who opposed the law.

Puppy mills take a factory-like approach to animal breeding: maximum puppy output with minimal cost and care, Fritchey said. He noted that's in contrast to many reliable breeders, who take loving care of animals and only breed a few dogs at a time.

But customers aren't always given the details they need to know the difference, a problem he believes the legislation would solve.

The legislation, if passed in its proposed form, would:

- Create a "Dog Breeder License Act," which would prevent breeders from having more than 20 unaltered dogs, that is, dogs not neutered or spayed.
- Prohibit people from obtaining a dog-breeding license if they have been convicted of a felony animal-cruelty crime, including dogfighting.
- Require dog breeders to keep dogs in buildings without wire flooring and with sufficient heating, cooling and ventilation. Humane Society officials said Sunday that many puppy mills they've uncovered have dogs in crates stacked high on top of each other, with the wire flooring of the crates destroying the animals' paws over time.
- Require pet stores and breeders to provide potential pet buyers with the dog's full medical history, information of spaying and neutering, and information about any prior medical care. Officials said many dogs from puppy mills end up having substantial medical problems because of interbreeding and exposure to disease in cramped environments.
- Establish penalties starting with fines and escalating to having animals seized and breeding operations shut down.

Chloe, the only surviving member of her litter at the puppy mill, is now six months old and attended the news conference wearing a collar with a large bow. Chloe affectionately snuggled into the arms of her owner, Roy Austin, who heads animal control in Macon County.

The young spaniel, with her giant eyes, floppy ears and a shiny black coat, may have fetched \$200 to \$400 at a pet store in Illinois and \$800 or more if she'd been shipped to an upscale pet store in New York state, said Cori Menkin, ASPCA's senior director of legislative initiatives.

The animals with Chloe at the puppy mill were covered with feces and fleas and had internal parasites, matted coats and damaged paws from standing 24 hours a day in urine-soaked wire cages.

"We've seen less enforcement by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture] and state departments of agriculture than we'd like," Menkin said. "This bill will change many of these horrific conditions."

PAWS Chicago, the no-kill shelter that hosted this morning's event and arranged adoptions for about 3,000 animals last year, estimates that about 500,000 puppies a year sold in the U.S. came from puppy mills.

--[Emily S. Achenbaum](#)