

This week is spring break for many, including our legislators. When they return to their offices in Montgomery there will only be a few days left in the 2014 session. Why is this important? Because a bill that affects the continued operation of the four low-cost spay-neuter clinics in Alabama is in the Senate and facing opposition from some who supported this bill last year. HB141 has passed the House and awaits vote in the Senate. This bill impacts the Veterinary Practice Act to allow for these clinics to operate as non-profit organizations that can employ licensed veterinarians who are responsible for all medical procedures in the clinics. On the face of it you might ask what is the big deal?

There is concern from some that the people/organization in charge of these clinics will be making medical decisions for the veterinarians they employ. That is a sad supposition since the veterinarians employed in these clinics must still be licensed by the Alabama State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners and subject to all their routine oversight for anything having to do with how they practice veterinary medicine and care for their animal patients.

HB141 would allow licensed veterinarians to be employed by nonprofit spay/neuter clinics and would require that those licensed veterinarians directly supervise all policies & services regarding all medical practices, treatments & surgeries of client animals. Beyond performing spay & neuter surgeries, HB141 would also limit these spay/neuter clinics to only treating external and intestinal parasites and administering a one-year rabies vaccinations at the time of the surgery.

No one understands the critical need for these low-cost spay/neuter clinics more than those who work in shelters. As we have written many times when sharing our intake numbers, 60% of our intake consists of juvenile animals – puppies and kittens under six months old. While we work as hard as we can to find new and loving homes for our pets, the reality is that adoptions will not solve the harsh reality of euthanasia. Reducing the intake of homeless and unwanted pets is the key to reducing euthanasia and absolutely vital to that is reducing unnecessary and unwanted litters of puppies and kittens for which there are simply not enough homes.

Our shelter has seen a slight reduction in our intake over the past few years – and we do think that some of that reduction is attributable to having the Alabama Animal Alliance (AAA) Spay/Neuter Clinic close by in Montgomery, accessible to the pet owners of Elmore County. And since we are able to have all of our pets spayed or neutered at AAA prior to their adoption, none of our adopted pets will ever have an ‘oops’ litter and contribute to the area’s pet overpopulation. This is a win-win for our adopters, our pets, our shelter, and the community.

So, NOW is the time for you to get involved and let your Senator know how you feel on HB141. Please pick up the phone, write a quick letter and let your Senator know that these clinics are important and need to be protected. From insiders working hard in Montgomery, the following Senators have indicated they are going to vote AGAINST HB141: Allen, Beason, Bussman, Glover, Holley, Scofield, Williams(P), Beasley, Brewbaker, Dial, Hightower, McGill and Whatley. Please share this with your family and friends across the state in case their area is represented by one of these Senators and ask them to please call without delay – they must hear from the pet owning public that HB141 needs passed so that everyone involved can get back to the business at hand – taking care of pets and reducing pet overpopulation in Alabama!

To find your Senator and his/her contact info, just go to the website for the Alabama Senate at: <http://www.legislature.state.al.us/senate/senate.html>. If you need any help, send us an email at [hselco@bellsouth.net](mailto:hselco@bellsouth.net).