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Chapter No. 536
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SENATE BILL NO. 2821

Originated in Senate *Herold Byrnes* Secretary

SENATE BILL NO. 2821

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 97-41-16, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO ENACT THE "MISSISSIPPI DOG AND CAT PET PROTECTION LAW OF 2011"; TO CLARIFY AND REVISE THE CRIME OF CRUELTY TO A DOG OR CAT; TO SPECIFICALLY DESCRIBE ACTIVITIES THAT DO NOT CONSTITUTE THE CRIME OF CRUELTY TO A DOG OR CAT; TO AMEND SECTIONS 97-41-1, 97-41-3, 97-41-5, 97-41-7, 97-41-9, 97-41-17, 97-41-21 AND 97-41-23, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, IN CONFORMITY TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Section 97-41-16, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-16. (1) (a) The provisions of this section shall be known and may be cited as the "Mississippi Dog and Cat Pet Protection Law of 2011."

(b) The intent of the Legislature in enacting this law is to provide only for the protection of domesticated dogs and cats, as these are the animals most often serving as the loyal and beloved pets of the citizens of this state. Animals other than domesticated dogs and cats are specifically excluded from the enhanced protection described in this act for dogs and cats. The provisions of this act do not apply, and shall not be construed as applying, to any animal other than a domesticated dog or cat.

(2) (a) If a person * * * shall intentionally or with criminal negligence wound, deprive of adequate shelter, food or water, or carry or confine in a cruel manner, any domesticated dog or cat, or cause any person to do the same, then he or she shall be guilty of the offense of simple cruelty to a dog or cat. A person who is convicted of the offense of simple cruelty to a dog or cat shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not more than

One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00), or * * * imprisoned not more than six (6) months, or both.

(b) If a person with malice shall intentionally torture, mutilate, maim, burn, starve or disfigure any domesticated dog or cat, or cause any person to do the same, then he or she shall be guilty of the offense of aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat.

(i) A person who is convicted of a first offense of aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not more than Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00), or imprisoned for not more than six (6) months, or both.

(ii) A person who is convicted of a second or subsequent offense of aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat, the offenses being committed within a period of five (5) years, shall be guilty of a felony and fined not more than Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) and imprisoned for not less than one (1) year nor more than five (5) years.

(c) A conviction entered upon a plea of nolo contendere to a charge of aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat shall be counted as a conviction for the purpose of determining whether a later conviction is a first or subsequent offense.

(d) For purposes of this section, one or more alleged acts of the offenses of simple cruelty to a dog or cat or aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat, committed against one or more domesticated dogs or cats, or any combination thereof, shall constitute a single offense if the alleged acts occurred at the same time.

(3) In addition to such fine or imprisonment which may be imposed:

(a) The court shall order that restitution be made to the owner of such dog or cat. The measure for restitution in money shall be the current replacement value of such loss and the

actual veterinarian fees, medicine, special supplies, loss of income and other costs incurred as a result of actions in violation of subsection (2) of this section; and

(b) The court may order that:

(i) The reasonable costs of sheltering, transporting and rehabilitating the dog or cat, and any other costs directly related to the care of the dog or cat, be reimbursed to:

1. Any law enforcement agency; or
2. Any agency or department of a political subdivision that is charged with the control, protection or welfare of dogs or cats within the subdivision. The agency or department may reimburse a nongovernmental organization for such costs, if the organization possesses nonprofit status under the United States Internal Revenue Code and has the purpose of protecting the welfare of, or preventing cruelty to, dogs or cats.

(ii) The person convicted:

1. Receive a psychiatric or psychological evaluation and counseling or treatment for a length of time as prescribed by the court. The cost of any evaluation, counseling and treatment shall be paid by the offender upon order of the court, up to a maximum amount that is no more than the jurisdictional limit of the sentencing court.

2. Perform community service for a period not exceeding the applicable maximum term of imprisonment that may be imposed for conviction of the offense.

3. Be enjoined from employment in any position that involves the care of a dog or cat, or in any place where dogs or cats are kept or confined, for a period which the court deems appropriate.

(4) (a) Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting a person from:

(i) Defending himself or herself or another person from physical or economic injury being threatened or caused by a dog or cat.

(ii) Injuring or killing an unconfined dog or cat on the property of the person, if the unconfined dog or cat is believed to constitute a threat of physical injury or damage to any domesticated animal under the care or control of such person.

(iii) Acting under the provisions of Section 95-5-19 to protect poultry or livestock from a trespassing dog that is in the act of chasing or killing the poultry or livestock, or acting to protect poultry or livestock from a trespassing cat that is in the act of chasing or killing the poultry or livestock.

(iv) Engaging in practices that are licensed or lawful under the Mississippi Veterinary Practice Act, Section 73-39-51 et seq., or engaging in activities by any licensed veterinarian while following accepted standards of practice of the profession within the State of Mississippi, including the euthanizing of a dog or cat.

(v) Rendering emergency care, treatment, or assistance to a dog or cat that is abandoned, ill, injured, or in distress, if the person rendering the care, treatment, or assistance is acting in good faith.

(vi) Performing activities associated with accepted agricultural and animal husbandry practices with regard to livestock, poultry or other animals, including those activities which involve:

1. Using dogs in such practices.
2. Raising, managing and using animals to provide food, fiber or transportation.
3. Butchering animals and processing food.

(vii) Training for, or participating in, a rodeo, equine activity, dog show, event sponsored by a kennel club or other bona fide organization that promotes the breeding or showing

of dogs or cats, or any other competitive event which involves the lawful use of dogs or cats.

(viii) Engaging in accepted practices of dog or cat identification.

(ix) Engaging in lawful activities that are regulated by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks or the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, including without limitation, hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife and seafood management.

(x) Performing scientific, research, medical and zoological activities undertaken by research and education facilities or institutions that are:

1. Regulated under the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act, 7 USCS 2131 et seq., as in effect on July 1, 2011;

2. Regulated under the provisions of the Health Research Extension Act of 1985, Public Law No. 99-158; or

3. Subject to any other applicable state or federal law or regulation governing animal research as in effect on July 1, 2011.

(xi) Disposing of or destroying certain dogs under authority of Sections 19-5-50, 21-19-9 and 41-53-11, which allow counties, municipalities and certain law enforcement officers to destroy dogs running at large without proper identification indicating that such dogs have been vaccinated for rabies.

(xii) Engaging in professional pest control activities, including those activities governed by the Mississippi Pesticide Law of 1975, Section 69-23-1 et seq.; professional services related to entomology, plant pathology, horticulture, tree surgery, weed control or soil classification, as regulated under Section 69-19-1 et seq.; and any other pest control activities conducted in accordance with state law.

(xiii) Performing the humane euthanization of a dog or cat pursuant to Section 97-41-3.

(b) If the owner or person in control of a dog or cat is precluded, by natural or other causes beyond his reasonable control, from acting to prevent an act or omission that might otherwise constitute an allegation of the offense of simple cruelty to a dog or cat or the offense of aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat, then that person shall not be guilty of the offense. Natural or other causes beyond the reasonable control of the person include, without limitation, acts of God, declarations of disaster, emergencies, acts of war, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods or other natural disasters.

(5) The provisions of this section shall not be construed to:

(a) Apply to any animal other than a dog or cat.

(b) Create any civil or criminal liability on the part of the driver of a motor vehicle if the driver unintentionally injures or kills a dog or cat as a result of the dog or cat being accidentally hit by the vehicle.

(6) (a) Except as otherwise provided in Section 97-35-47 for the false reporting of a crime, a person, who in good faith and acting without malice, reports a suspected incident of simple cruelty to a dog or cat, or aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat, to a local animal control, protection or welfare organization, a local law enforcement agency, or the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, shall be immune from civil and criminal liability for reporting the incident.

(b) A veterinarian licensed in Mississippi or a person acting at the direction of a veterinarian licensed in Mississippi, who in good faith and acting without malice, participates in the investigation of an alleged offense of simple or aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat, or makes a decision or renders services regarding the care of a dog or cat that is involved in the

investigation, shall be immune from civil and criminal liability for those acts.

(7) Other than an agency or department of a political subdivision that is charged with the control, protection or welfare of dogs or cats within the subdivision, any organization that has the purpose of protecting the welfare of, or preventing cruelty to, dogs or cats, shall register the organization with the sheriff of the county in which the organization operates a physical facility for the protection, welfare or shelter of dogs or cats, on or before the first day of October each year. The provisions of this subsection (7) shall apply to any organization that has the purpose of protecting the welfare of dogs or cats, or preventing cruelty to dogs or cats, regardless of whether the organization also protects animals other than dogs or cats.

(8) Nothing in this section shall limit the authority of a municipality or board of supervisors to adopt ordinances, rules, regulations or resolutions which may be, in whole or in part, more restrictive than the provisions of this section, and in those cases, the more restrictive ordinances, rules, regulations or resolutions will govern.

SECTION 2. Section 97-41-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-1. Except as otherwise provided in Section 97-41-16 for a dog or cat, if any person shall intentionally or with criminal negligence override, overdrive, overload, torture, torment, unjustifiably injure, deprive of necessary sustenance, food, or drink; or cruelly beat or needlessly mutilate; or cause or procure to be overridden, overdriven, overloaded, tortured, unjustifiably injured, tormented, or deprived of necessary sustenance, food or drink; or to be cruelly beaten or needlessly mutilated or killed, any living creature, every such offender shall, for every offense, be guilty of a misdemeanor.

SECTION 3. Section 97-41-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-3. (1) Any sheriff, constable, policeman, or agent of a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals may kill, or cause to be killed, any animal other than a dog or cat found neglected or abandoned, if in the opinion of three (3) respectable citizens it is injured or diseased past recovery, or by age has become useless.

(2) (a) After all reasonable attempts have been made to locate the legal owner of a dog or cat that is found maimed, wounded, injured or diseased, the dog or cat may be euthanized, or caused to be euthanized, by:

(i) A law enforcement officer;

(ii) A veterinarian licensed in Mississippi;

(iii) An employee of an agency or department of a political subdivision that is charged with the control or welfare of dogs or cats within the subdivision; or

(iv) An employee or agent of an organization that has the purpose of protecting the welfare of or preventing cruelty to dogs or cats and that possesses nonprofit status under the United States Internal Revenue Code.

(b) The provisions of this subsection (2) shall not be construed to prevent the immediate euthanasia by the persons enumerated in this subsection or by any other person, if it is necessary to prevent unrelievable suffering of the dog or cat.

(3) Any person acting in good faith and without malice pursuant to this section shall be immune from civil and criminal liability for that action.

SECTION 4. Section 97-41-5, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-5. If any person shall carry, or cause to be carried by hand or in or upon any vehicle or other conveyance, any

creature other than a dog or cat in a cruel or inhuman manner, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

SECTION 5. Section 97-41-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-7. If any person shall confine, or cause to be confined, in any stable, lot, or other place, any living creature other than a dog or cat, without supplying the same during such confinement with a sufficient quantity of good and wholesome food and water, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

SECTION 6. Section 97-41-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-9. If any person be the owner or have the custody of any living creature other than a dog or cat and unjustifiably neglect or refuse to furnish it necessary sustenance, food, or drink, he shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

SECTION 7. Section 97-41-17, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-17. Every person who shall willfully and unlawfully administer any poison to any horse, mare, colt, mule, jack, jennet, cattle, deer, dog, cat, hog, sheep, chicken, duck, goose, turkey, pea-fowl, guinea-fowl, or partridge, or shall maliciously expose any poison substance with intent that the same should be taken or swallowed by any horse, mare, colt, mule, jack, jennet, cattle, dog, cat, hog, sheep, chicken, duck, goose, turkey, pea-fowl, guinea-fowl, or partridge, shall, upon conviction, be punished by imprisonment in the Penitentiary not exceeding three (3) years, or in the county jail not exceeding one (1) year, and by a fine not exceeding Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00).

SECTION 8. Section 97-41-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-21. (1) An individual shall not do either of the following:

(a) Willfully and maliciously assault, beat, harass, injure, or attempt to assault, beat, harass or injure, a dog that he or she knows or has reason to believe is a guide or leader dog for a blind individual, a hearing dog for a deaf or audibly impaired individual, * * * a service dog for a physically limited individual, or a support dog for a mobility impaired person as described in Sections 43-6-151 through 43-6-155.

(b) Willfully and maliciously impede or interfere with, or attempt to impede or interfere with, duties performed by a dog that he or she knows or has reason to believe is a guide or leader dog for a blind individual, a hearing dog for a deaf or audibly impaired individual, * * * a service dog for a physically limited individual, or a support dog for a mobility impaired person as described in Sections 43-6-151 through 43-6-155.

(2) An individual who violates subsection (1) is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than ninety (90) days or a fine of not more than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00), or both.

(3) In a prosecution for a violation of subsection (1), evidence that the defendant initiated or continued conduct directed toward a dog described in subsection (1) after being requested to avoid or discontinue that conduct or similar conduct by a blind, deaf, audibly impaired, physically limited or mobility impaired individual being served or assisted by the dog shall give rise to a rebuttable presumption that the conduct was initiated or continued maliciously.

(4) A conviction and imposition of a sentence under this section does not prevent a conviction and imposition of a sentence under Section 97-41-16 pertaining to the offenses of simple or aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat, or any other applicable provision of law.

(5) As used in this section:

(a) "Audibly impaired" means the inability to hear air conduction thresholds at an average of forty (40) decibels or greater in the individual's better ear.

(b) "Blind" means having a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the individual's better eye with correction, or having a limitation of the individual's field of vision such that the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angular distance not greater than twenty (20) degrees.

(c) "Deaf" means the individual's hearing is totally impaired or the individual's hearing, with or without amplification, is so seriously impaired that the primary means of receiving spoken language is through other sensory input, including, but not limited to, lip reading, sign language, finger spelling or reading.

(d) "Harass" means to engage in any conduct directed toward a guide, leader, hearing or service dog that is likely to impede or interfere with the dog's performance of its duties or that places the blind, deaf, audibly impaired or physically limited individual being served or assisted by the dog in danger of injury.

(e) "Injure" means to cause any physical injury to a dog described in subsection (1).

(f) "Maliciously" means any of the following:

(i) With intent to assault, beat, harass or injure a dog described in subsection (1).

(ii) With intent to impede or interfere with duties performed by a dog described in subsection (1).

(iii) With intent to disturb, endanger or cause emotional distress to a blind, deaf, audibly impaired or physically limited individual being served or assisted by a dog described in subsection (1).

(iv) With knowledge that the individual's conduct will, or is likely to, harass or injure a dog described in subsection (1).

(v) With knowledge that the individual's conduct will, or is likely to, impede or interfere with duties performed by a dog described in subsection (1).

(vi) With knowledge that the individual's conduct will, or is likely to, disturb, endanger or cause emotional distress to a blind, deaf, audibly impaired or physically limited individual being served or assisted by a dog described in subsection (1).

(g) "Physically limited" means having limited ambulatory abilities and includes, but is not limited to, having a temporary or permanent impairment or condition that does one or more of the following:

(i) Causes the individual to use a wheelchair or walk with difficulty or insecurity.

(ii) Affects sight or hearing to the extent that an individual is insecure or exposed to danger.

(iii) Causes faulty coordination.

(iv) Reduces mobility, flexibility, coordination or perceptiveness.

SECTION 9. Section 97-41-23, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-41-23. (1) It is unlawful for any person to willfully and maliciously taunt, torment, tease, beat, strike, or to administer, expose or inject any desensitizing drugs, chemicals or substance to any public service animal. Any person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof shall be fined not more than Two Hundred Dollars (\$200.00) and be imprisoned not more than five (5) days, or both.

(2) Any person who, without just cause, purposely kills or injures any public service animal is guilty of a felony and upon

conviction shall be fined not more than Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) and be imprisoned not more than five (5) years, or both.

(3) For purposes of this section, the term "public service animal" means any animal trained and used to assist a law enforcement agency, public safety entity or search and rescue agency.

(4) A conviction and imposition of a sentence under this section does not prevent a conviction and imposition of a sentence under Section 97-41-16 pertaining to the offenses of simple or aggravated cruelty to a dog or cat, or under any other applicable provision of law.

(5) Any person guilty of violating subsection (2) of this section shall also be required to make restitution to the law enforcement agency or owner aggrieved thereby.

(6) The provisions of this section shall not apply to the lawful practice of veterinary medicine.

SECTION 10. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

PASSED BY THE SENATE
March 29, 2011



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 30, 2011



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR



GOVERNOR

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