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# SECTION REVIEW

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ANIMAL RIGHTS LAW

## 'Puppy Doe'-inspired legislation will further protect abused animals

BY KAREN RABINOVICI

The harrowing case of "Puppy Doe," as one canine victim of severe abuse came to be called, became infamous nationwide, and Puppy Doe became representative of all mistreated animals. As the case swept over the nation, a collective outraged voice demanded that perpetrators of such severe abuse towards innocent animals be handled in an appropriate manner by the justice system — in other words, such people should not be able to "get away with it," as most laws, with light penalties and minimum or no reporting requirements, have previously enabled. In Massachusetts, that voice culminated in the passage of S. 2345, An Act Protecting Animal Welfare and Safety, a major victory on behalf of abused animals in Massachusetts.

Puppy Doe was confiscated in Quincy by the Animal Rescue League of Boston in August 2013. Puppy Doe's physical state revealed that she had been systematically and severely starved and tortured over several months. The me-



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dia reported that her wounds showed "medieval-style" torture. Among many other injuries, Puppy Doe was half her normal weight, had been stabbed and burned, was subjected to having her limbs stretched until her joints ripped apart, had broken ribs and vertebrae, had crushed cheekbones, and her tongue had been sliced in two halves. Photos of the puppy, covered in horrific wounds, haunted the population nationwide. Because her injuries were so severe, Puppy Doe had to be humanely euthanized. Her alleged abuser, Radoslaw Czerkawski, has been charged with animal cruelty. Puppy Doe united the public in its determination to ensure that people such as her owner be penal-

ized as deserved.

S. 2345 increases maximum penalties for animal cruelty from five to seven years in prison and from \$2,500 fines to \$5,000 fines. It enhances penalties for repeat offenders, changing prison time to up to ten years and fines up to \$10,000. S. 2345 requires veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty, and it creates a task force to consider future protections for animals and ways to strengthen Massachusetts' animal cruelty laws. S. 2345 was signed into law on August 20, 2014, and took effect on Nov. 18, 2014.

The last time penalties for animal cruelty were updated was in 2004, and that update was less protective than animal advocates originally sought, so S. 2345 is welcome and necessary. In addition, more protective animal cruelty laws are in the Massachusetts community's interest, as research has shown a link between domestic violence and animal abuse. Patterns have been proven among perpetrators of animal abuse and child abuse, spousal abuse, and elder abuse, amongst other forms of violence.

Then Gov. Deval Patrick, Reps.



Bruce Ayers and Louis Kafka, Sens. Bruce Tarr and Mark Montigny, and former Sen. Gale Candaras helped ensure that the bill move as far as possible during the formal legislative session. Although Puppy Doe's short life was miserable and pain- and fear-filled, the memory of the puppy is memorialized in S. 2345, leaving her with a lasting legacy that will help protect other abused animals.

For more information on the intersection of the law and animal rights, please consider joining the Massachusetts Bar Association's Animal Law Practice Group. ■