

April 15, 2007

Assembly Member Mike Eng, Chair
Assembly Committee on Business and Professions
1020 N Street, Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814
Attention: Tracy Rhine, Committee Consultant
FAX 916-319-3306

Re: CA AB 1634 (Levine) California Healthy Pets Act: OPPOSE IN ANY FORM

Hon Mr. Eng:

The Alaskan Klee Kai Association of America (AKKAOA) respectfully requests that you oppose Assembly Bill 1634 in any form (original bill and any amendments to the bill), the California Healthy Pets Act.

AKKAOA is an association of owners, breeders and fanciers of the Alaskan Klee Kai, also known as the AKK. The AKK is a fairly new and relatively rare breed of small, northern-type dogs derived from the Alaskan Husky - the dogs of the Iditarod. Our breed is recognized by the United Kennel Club and the American Rare Breed Association. We have members throughout the United States and Canada, with a significant number residing in California. Our members and their dogs regularly participate in conformation competition, as well as agility, obedience and other canine sports. AKK are bred to be companion dogs, and they are cherished members of their owners' families.

We recognize that the purported purpose of Assembly Bill 1634 is to reduce the number of cats and dogs in shelters in California. We do not believe, however, that it will accomplish that objective. Instead, it will strip conscientious, law abiding and ethical dog owners of their legal rights, increase the number of puppy-mill puppies imported from out of state, and destroy the working dogs of California. In short, it is a very bad piece of legislation, both poorly drafted and philosophically flawed.

AB 1634 tries to reduce shelter populations by reducing the number of unwanted litters. But unwanted litters are not the source of the problem. Owner education and voluntary spay/neuter outreach have proven quite successful in controlling accidental breeding. Most puppies from litters that are unwanted are adopted almost immediately. The real problem is the result of unwanted adult dogs who were acquired as puppies by owners who either can't or won't honor their initial commitment and continue to provide for the needs of those puppies once they become adults. AB 1634 will have no impact on the number of adult dogs in shelters.

AB 1634 includes exemptions for certain working dogs, but in fact these exemptions are mostly useless. For example, the bill exempts trained and certified guide and service dogs, police dogs and search dogs employed by law enforcement. Other dogs must be altered by four months of age. However, no dog is a trained and certified guide dog, service dog, police dog, or search dog at four months of age. Typically certification occurs at closer to two years of age; therefore the exemption for certified dogs beyond the current generation is meaningless.

The bill also includes an exemption for dogs registered with the AKC, UKC, and ADBA, but has no exemption for carefully bred working dogs who are not included in these specified registries. It must be understood that kennel club registration means only that a given dog's ancestors were recognized members of a particular breed. It does not mean that dog is physically, mentally or genetically suitable to breed. The AKC itself has said that registration does not certify "good breeding." Working dogs in California often are not registered with the listed kennel clubs. Some are registered with other registries, but many are not and many are unregistrable. Nevertheless, breeders of working dogs choose the dogs they breed based on health and performance, not "papers," and produce vigorous, top-performing dogs as a result. They should be allowed to continue to do so.

Also, from a very practical perspective, we note that this legislation would apply to out-of-state dogs entering California to participate in various forms of dog competition: kennel Club conformation shows, agility and obedience competition, and other events. Such competition would likely cease in California, since no owner from outside the state would risk entering the state and becoming subject to this legislation's mandatory spay/neuter requirements.

We hope you will oppose this misguided bill, and look forward to your reply. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Tammy Martin
AKKAOA President

Faxes also sent to the following:

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