



## Maryland Dog Federation, Inc.

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## Maryland Dog Federation Sues Prince George's County to End Dog Breed Ban

### Court orders immediate return of resident's service dog

September 24, 2013, GREENBELT, MARYLAND – A Maryland Circuit Court judge has ruled that Prince George's County is in violation of state law, ordering the immediate return of a mobility assistance service dog named Storm to her Beltsville owner who needs her dog to get around safely. The Maryland Animal Law Center's Anne Benaroya, Esq., is the attorney for plaintiffs Dani Gugliemi and the Maryland Dog Federation, who is representing a number of its members whose dogs have been seized under this law.

Since early July of this year, trained service dog Storm has been prohibited from the county for being a "pit bull", sight unseen, after an anonymous complaint made to Prince George's County Animal Management. According to current law, dogs of three breeds, mixes of those breeds, or dogs that resemble those breeds are banned from the county. Such dogs are subject to confiscation and death by lethal injection; their owners are subject to fine and up to six months in jail. State and Federal law does not permit breed discriminatory laws such as the county's ban to affect a person with a disability or her service dog. Storm's owner, a polio, cancer, and chemotherapy survivor with obvious mobility impairment, was threatened with arrest if Storm was ever found in the county.

Additionally, a preliminary injunction to *completely* stop the enforcement of the county's "pit bull ban" is scheduled for October 3rd. If signed, it would require the county to immediately stop seizing dogs from their families simply for what they look like. A trial to stop enforcement permanently would follow which would eliminate the breed specific dog law throughout the county.



"This will be a true David and Goliath case," says Maryland Dog Federation Executive Director Adrienne Lefkowitz. "We are a local grassroots organization with limited resources going up against a huge county. This case is far from won and fighting for our rights is an expensive process. We expect a lot of resistance from the county and that's why we need the support of everyone who cares about this issue." For more information visit the [federation website www.marylanddogfederation.com/local](http://www.marylanddogfederation.com/local) or contribute to the [Prince George's County Family Dog Legal Defense Fund: http://bit.ly/PGFamDogs](http://bit.ly/PGFamDogs)

Prince George's County is the second largest municipality in the United States to have breed discriminatory law, which was enacted in 1997. Like thousands of other jurisdictions across the country, the county has a number of other breed neutral, behavior specific laws that protect the public from dangerous, stray, and nuisance dogs. Breed bans allow for dogs to be seized and killed for doing nothing wrong.

A 2005 county task force report concluded the county breed specific law costs hundreds of thousands of dollars every year to enforce, yet hundreds and hundreds of dogs identified as "pit bulls" still enter the county shelter and there seems to be no appreciable decrease of illegal dogs in the county. Although the "breed ban" is a criminal offense, many residents have had their dogs shot by the police or taken away by Animal Management without even being charged with a crime and therefore, without a right to a public defender or jury trial.

[Prince George's County Executive](#) Rushern Baker III has stated he would like to see the Prince George's county ban repealed and the breed neutral dangerous animal laws well enforced.

Based on myth and misinformation, a 2012 ruling by the Maryland Court of Appeals declared "purebred pit bulls" to be inherently dangerous and landlords be held responsible for injuries incurred as a result of those dogs' involvement in a dog bite incident on their rental property. 2013 legislation to nullify this ruling failed in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. It is anticipated that the Maryland General Assembly will again attempt to nullify the ruling during the upcoming General Assembly session, scheduled to begin in January 2014.

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*The Maryland Dog Federation is a dog owner advocacy group and is a plaintiff in this case. The Maryland Dog Federation is a grassroots, dog owner advocacy organization presenting a rational, balanced approach to dog ownership while maintaining public safety. We represent thousands of dog owners in Maryland who are concerned about laws and policies that directly impact them. Led by rational,*



*knowledgeable experts, the federation is available to state and local lawmakers and policymakers to discuss the benefits of good dog law and the unintended consequences of bad dog law. We collaborate regularly with other organizations and encourage dialog with us early in the process to forge effective solutions.*

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