

Wolf-dog crosses included in Senate bill prohibition

By MIKE MALOTT
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Sale and possession of danger animals, including wolf-dog crosses and other "large carnivores" such as bears or undomesticated cats, would be illegal under a set of bills approved by the Michigan Senate.

But critics were concerned some family dogs might be confused for wolf-dogs.

Members voted 33-2 on Senate Bill 732, sponsored by Sen. Bill Bullard (R-Highland) and 29-6 on Senate Bill 205,

sponsored by Sen. Leon Stille (R-Spring Lake) outlawing the dangerous animals Thursday, Dec. 2.

Both bills would allow those who already own such exotic animals to keep their pets, but they would be subject to a set of new rules. Current owners would be required to post their property to warn passers-by that a dangerous animal is housed there, would not be allowed to leash their animals unattended in the yard, and would have to get an annual permit from a local animal control officer. Both bills allow for

destruction of those animals if they harm a human.

Sen. David Jaye (R-Macomb) argued that both bills would erode personal liberties, but he was especially concerned about the ban on wolf-dogs.

"You're going to condemn a lot of innocent people to lose their pets, their loyal family dog, and people with modest incomes will not have enough money to contest the claims by others that their dog is not a wolf dog," he said. "There is no scientific way to visually, medically, or any way through DNA testing to

identify what is a wolf dog ... I wonder how many of you would think that the Siberian husky is or isn't a wolf dog? What about an Alaskan malamute?"

Sen. John Cherry (D-Clio) noted that there are characteristics which can be used to identify wolf-dogs.

"A wolf tracks in a straight line," he said. "Hardly any dogs do that. Is the tail curled or straight?" Dogs' tails are curled.

Cherry offered an amendment to the bill to identify wolf-dogs that have all of four traits mentioned in the law. Previously,

the bill defined an animal as a wolf-dog if it possessed any one of the four traits.

"Every wolf-dog is a danger," he said, explaining why they should be outlawed for sale.

Both bills now move to the House for approval.

All local senators voted for the measures, except Sen. Joanne Emmons (R-Big Rapids) who was absent.

Bid to raise charter school cap fails

By MIKE MALOTT
HOMETOWN NEWS SERVICE

Gov. John Engler and House Republicans failed in their attempts last week to raise the cap on the number of charter schools allowed to operate in Michigan, but they also promised to come back and try again.

Just a hand full of votes shy of the number needed for passage, proponents like Speaker Rep. Paul DeWeese (R-Williamston), Speaker of the House Chuck Perricone and Engler spent the week in intense negotiations trying to win over the last few reticent members of their own caucus.

On Tuesday, Nov. 30, DeWeese said he was short only "a couple of votes" and he was adjusting his bill line by line to win them over.

On Wednesday, Dec. 1, Republicans put the fifth rewrite of the bill to a test, but it fell a half dozen votes shy. The board was cleared before the vote was tallied or recorded, a practice which has become standard procedure in the House when leadership wants to keep a bill alive.

"Every time he (DeWeese) changes a word to get one vote, he loses another," House Majority Floor Leader Andrew Raczkowski (R-Farmington Hills) explained.

On Thursday, Dec. 2 — which was considered to be the deadline if additional charter schools are to be opened next fall — Perricone announced that Republicans would put off another attempt. He said he was rejecting an offer by House Democrats to trade passage of the raised charter school cap in return for killing off a bill which would eliminate residency requirements for city workers.

"I don't make that kind of trade for anything ... Residency is a completely separate issue," Perricone explained.

Exactly who initiated talk of the trade isn't clear. Perricone said Democrats are demanding it. Minority Leader Mike Hanley (D-Saginaw) said it was the governor who first offered it, which the governor's office denied.

It may have been more than just moral outrage that caused Perricone to toss out the trade.

"There were eight Republicans who were ready to bolt if Chuck Perricone deals," Rep. Bob Gosnell (R-Troy) said. "They were ready to bolt because he was just talking to the Dems. He'd have lost more votes than he would have gained."

To open new charter schools next year, the bill would have to pass by Dec. 31 allowing the raised cap to go into effect in April. The legislature is scheduled to adjourn Dec. 9, and that means there will no longer be time for a required five-day layover between house and senate ... unless lawmakers decide to ignore their own rules.

"They'll find a way," Gosnell said, stating confidently that the bill can still be passed before legislators take off for Christmas break.

House Bill 4706, initially introduced by Rep. LaMar Lemmons (D-Detroit) but now significantly rewritten, would raise the cap on charter schools set up through universities from 150 to 200 next year. After that, the cap would increase 25 per year.

Democrats say bill is 'racist,' 'union busting'

By MIKE MALOTT
HOMETOWN NEWS SERVICE

Principals and supervisory personnel in local school districts dodged a legislative bullet Wednesday. They'll retain the right to form unions and engage in collective bargaining ... but not those in the city of Detroit.

Republican lawmakers voted to narrow a proposed ban on unionization of school district administrators to the city of Detroit only.

That drew a furious response from Democrats.

"This bill is both racist and union busting, and the people of

this state will not forget," Rep. Lynne Martinez (D-Lansing) said in anger during the debate on the House floor.

"There is no excuse for this political body to pass bill after bill after bill damaging the people of one city in the state, a city about which you know nothing and wish to have no responsibility."

Verbiage from Detroit Democrats was even harsher.

Rep. Irma Clark (D-Detroit) called the proposal "disgusting" and labeled the House of Representatives a "prostitution ring" for considering it.

"Maybe we should pass some

PRINCIPALS, SUPERVISORS

legislation for the rest of the state," said Rep. Bob Brown (D-Dearborn Heights).

Republicans bristled at the charge of racism. Sen. Leon Stille (R-Spring Lake) said he had listened to the House debate and found it "embarrassing."

"This is about improving education in the City of Detroit," Rep. Gene DeRossett (R-Manchester) said. "If we were racist,

why would we care?"

As initially proposed, Senate Bill 669, sponsored by Sen. Loren Bennett (R-Canton) would have ban unions for all school principals and supervisors across the state. He said he had been spurred to introduce the bill by last fall's teacher strike in Detroit. Some principals, he said, joined teachers on the picket lines.

"When the bill left this chamber, it was good public policy," Bennett said. "There ought to be a definite distinction between labor and management. But the House pared it down to a number of distressed schools dis-

tricts. This amendment further narrows it down to just the City of Detroit."

"Let's deal," Stille argued, "with only the one city where it is a problem."

On the Detroit-only version of the bill, Senators voted 22-15 to approve.

Here's how area senators voted:

Yes — Sens. Bill Bullard (R-Highland), Mat Dunaskis (R-Lake Orion) and Shirley Johnson (R-Royal Oak).

No — Sens. John D. Cherry Jr. (D-Clio) and Gary Peters (D-Bloomfield).

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