



PAWS Act Coalition Hails Passage of Appropriations Bill as Key Milestone in Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence and their Pets

Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 provides \$2 million for new Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act grant program

WASHINGTON, DC (January 15, 2020) – The PAWS Act Coalition, a group of nonprofit and for-profit organizations, lauded the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020, which, for the first time, will provide \$2 million in USDA grants to enable more domestic violence shelters to become pet-friendly so that victims of domestic violence and their pets may shelter and heal together. The grants come one year after the Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act was authorized as part of the 2019 Farm Bill, which received bipartisan support in its passage.

“These new grants will help expand the network of domestic violence shelters which allow pets to accompany their families seeking safe shelter,” said Nina Leigh Krueger, president of Purina. “This is an important milestone in the coalition’s collective efforts to create safer communities for pets and pet owners, and Purina will remain steadfast in our commitment to protecting the bond between domestic abuse survivors and their pets by ensuring they can safely heal together.”

The PAWS Act Coalition would like to thank the original co-sponsors of the Pet and Women Safety Act for their leadership and commitment to its passage, especially the lead sponsors Congresswoman Katherine Clark (D-MA-5), Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) and former Senator Dean Heller (R-NV). The Coalition is also particularly grateful for Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) for spearheading the effort to pass the bill by including its language in the Farm Bill.

“No one should have to make the choice between finding safety and staying in a violent situation to protect their pet,” said Congresswoman Katherine Clark (D-MA-5). “This law and the newly appropriated federal dollars will empower survivors with the resources to leave a dangerous situation while being able to continue to care for their pet. I’m grateful for the partnerships we’ve formed between organizations working to end both domestic violence and animal abuse. Together, we will help save lives.”

The USDA will now be able to move forward to establish grants for domestic violence shelters to carry out programs to provide emergency and transitional shelter and housing assistance or short-term shelter and housing assistance for domestic violence victims with pets, service animals, emotional support animals, or horses. Grants awarded may also be used for programs that provide support services designed to enable someone fleeing domestic violence to locate and secure safe housing with their pet, safe accommodations for their pet, or related services such as transportation and other assistance.

“The PAWS Act Coalition looks forward to working with USDA and other federal agencies to support implementation of the PAWS Act grant program and to helping raise awareness of this important effort among the domestic violence shelter and the pet care community,” said Steven Feldman, Executive Director of the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI). “This funding will support real, life-saving change for domestic violence survivors and the pets that bring them so much joy and comfort.”

Organizations in the PAWS Act coalition include:

- Purina (Nestlé Purina PetCare)
- Human Animal Bond Research Institute (HABRI)
- Noah’s Animal House
- Pet Partners
- Urban Resource Institute (URI)

Two of these organizations, Noah’s Animal House and Urban Resource Institute are part of the only 10% of domestic violence shelters across the country who actively offer co-shelter services to keep both pets and their owners away from the dangers of domestic abuse. Together these two incredible organizations have saved more than 1,500 pets from abusive conditions, so that no domestic violence survivor is forced to choose between staying in an abusive relationship and leaving their pet with their abuser.

Did you know?

- Up to 65% of domestic violence victims remain in abusive situations out of fear for their pets’ safety.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, 4,774,000 women in the United States experience physical violence by an intimate partner every year.
- The majority of domestic violence situations include pets in the household, and 85% of women residing in domestic violence shelters reported a pet was harmed by their abuser.
- A growing body of science has demonstrated a link between domestic violence and animal cruelty. An outlet of emotional support for victims, the family pet often becomes a target for physical abuse.

“As we’ve seen throughout the past six years of running URI’s PALS (People and Animals Living Safely) Program, abusers often threaten to harm or inflict violence on a pet in order to control their victims,” said Nathaniel Fields, President and CEO of URI. “Not only do pet-friendly domestic violence shelters provide a critical avenue for escape, but they also channel the healing power of the human-pet bond during times of crisis and transition. The passage of the PAWS Act is an exciting milestone in this coalition’s work to ensure that all individuals seeking shelter from abuse and their beloved pets can live the safest, fullest lives possible.”

“Since 2007, Noah’s Animal House has cared for over 1,400 pets of domestic violence victims from 21 states across the U.S, in addition to our home state of Nevada. Women drove thousands of miles from Florida, Oklahoma, Maine, Texas and others, driving past other women’s shelters in every state for one reason only - their pet had to be included in their escape plan,” stated Staci Columbo Alonso, founder of Noah’s Animal House. “With the passing of the PAWS Act, more local women’s shelters can become pet friendly.”

“In support of the PAWS Act Coalition, Pet Partners grassroots advocates made their voices heard during every step of the legislative process – recruiting key co-sponsors in the Senate, supporting passage of the Senate Farm Bill, targeting members of the Conference Committee, and building support in communities across the country. Thanks to their efforts, many thousands of constituent messages, tweets, and phone calls to Congress were made emphasizing the importance of these provisions. Pet Partners is grateful for their actions that will help pets and people remain together in traumatic situations – when they need each other most,” said Annie Peters, CEO of Pet Partners.

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About Purina

Nestlé Purina PetCare promotes responsible pet care, community involvement and the positive bond between people and their pets. A premiere global manufacturer of pet products, Nestlé Purina PetCare is part of Nestlé S.A., a global leader in nutrition, health and wellness. Learn more about the Purina and RedRover partnership and Purple Leash Project grants at www.purpleleashproject.com

About Pet Partners

Pet Partners is the national leader in demonstrating and promoting the health and wellness benefits of animal-assisted interventions. Since the organization’s inception in 1977, the science proving these benefits has become indisputable. With more than 13,000 registered teams making more than 3 million visits annually, Pet Partners serves as the nation’s most prestigious nonprofit registering handlers of multiple species as volunteer teams. Pet Partners teams visit with patients in recovery, people with intellectual disabilities, seniors living with Alzheimer’s, students, veterans with PTSD, and those approaching end of life, improving human health and wellbeing through the human-animal bond. With the recent release of its [Standards of Practice for Animal-](#)

[Assisted Interventions](#) and international expansion, Pet Partners is globally recognized as the industry gold standard. For more information on Pet Partners, visit www.petpartners.org.

About the Urban Resource Institute

Urban Resource Institute (URI) is a leading non-profit organization that provides comprehensive, holistic, and supportive social services that aid and empower New Yorkers in times of crisis. URI's programs provide care for survivors of domestic violence, individuals with developmental disabilities, homeless families, and other at-risk populations, allowing them to live in safety and recover from trauma in both residential and non-residential settings. With deep community relationships and a flexible, innovative approach to program development and service delivery, URI is uniquely equipped to provide solutions to the challenges affecting New York City's most vulnerable populations. URI merged with the Center Against Domestic Violence in 2018, the first licensed provider of domestic violence shelter in New York. With nearly 80 years of combined experience, the organization is the largest provider of domestic violence residential services in the country, with the ability to shelter over 1,100 individuals, including survivors and their families, on any given day. For more information, please visit www.urinyc.org.

About Noah's Animal House

Noah's Animal House was the first stand-alone full service pet boarding facility in the country built on the grounds of and in partnership with The Shade Tree Shelter in 2007 to provide safety, shelter and support for the pets of the clients of the shelter. A second location serving up to 36 animals in Reno, Nevada opened February 2018 in partnership with the Domestic Violence Resource Center. In a national survey, 71 percent of women seeking safety in a domestic violence shelter reported pet abuse in their home and more than 25 percent delayed leaving because they did not have an escape plan that could include their pets. To learn more about Noah's Animal House, visit <http://www.noahsanimalhouse.org>.

About HABRI

HABRI is a not-for-profit organization that maintains the world's largest online library of human-animal bond research and information; funds innovative research projects to scientifically document the health benefits of companion animals; and informs the public about human-animal bond research and the beneficial role of companion animals in society. For more information, please visit <http://www.habri.org>.