

## Texas Senate Bill 5 [SB-5] Advances Health and Welfare of Our Dogs

by *John Weatherly*

Texas lawmakers brought a slew of new legislation to the Lone Star State this year, including Senate Bill 5 [SB-5], hailed by advocates as the “Safe Outdoor Dog Act.” The bill finally passed after multiple attempts to enact stronger requirements to prevent animal neglect and abuse failed, most recently during the regular session of the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature when it was vetoed by Gov. Greg Abbott.

Abbott claimed the bill [as passed] was overreaching and imposing toward dog owners, stating, “[Texas is no place for this kind of micro-managing and over-criminalization.](#)” Supporters of the bill say it marks a new day for outdoor dogs in Texas, however. The intent of the Bill is to prevent animal neglect and protect dogs against harmful methods of restraint, which can include the use of heavy chains, lack of access to water, lack of shelter from extreme weather, and the inability to reasonably move about and lie down – all of which can be horrific for dogs who may be forced to endure extreme weather conditions when left outside.

Law enforcement professionals and associations supported the Bill, and many came out publicly to state their feelings about it. Chambers County [Sheriff Brian Hawthorne said](#), “Sheriffs around Texas deal with the sad occurrence of animal cruelty on a daily basis. Without SB-5, our county officers are fighting animal cruelty with one hand tied behind our backs. The Sheriffs’ Association of Texas was pleased to see the Governor add SB-5 to his list of priorities in the special session, and proudly testify in support of the bill.”

Some Texas residents believe SB-5 will ban chaining a dog outside altogether. While that's not the main objective, there may be some impacts as the Bill is about humane treatment for dogs that are left outside. Animal Control Officer Lisa Cox, a 20-year veteran, shared her thoughts on the new law with [Stacy Sakai on News Channel 10 KFDA](#), saying, “I think it’s a long time coming. I wish they would say a dog can’t be restrained on anything, personally. I’m not too worried about this law coming out. I’m just glad it finally happened.”

Regardless of where you stand on the issue, beginning January 18, 2022, SB-5 makes it a criminal offense to chain a dog outside without adequate shelter from rain, hail, sleet, snow, subfreezing temperatures and extreme heat. Dogs that are tethered outside must be able to stand erect, sit, turn around and lie down in a normal position. It further prevents using heavy weights to restrict the dog's movements. Only humane tethers will be allowed, such as trolley systems or zip lines. Finally, SB-5 repeals the penalty provisions regarding the failure to comply within 24 hours, effectively lifting the 24-hour waiting period in cases like this. Now Animal Control and Law Enforcement can act immediately if a dog is in distress. Offenders will receive an immediate citation from a Peace Officer or Animal Control Officer that comes with a possible \$500 fine.

Read the full report from the Senate Committee:

<https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/873/billtext/html/SB00005S.htm>