

Dog Fighting: Raising Awareness to the Issue

As uncommon as dog fighting may seem, communities all across the country must be vigilant in raising awareness to the issue.

Tag Words: dog, fighting, awareness, law, issue, New Jersey, crime, raising

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Summary

According to the ASPCA, dog fighting arrests in the United States have numbered in the thousands between 2003 and 2008. There are certainly many more cases that are never discovered. The types of people involved in dog fighting or those who participate in the audience are a diverse group not limited to urban settings. Other illegal crimes that are associated with dog fighting include but are not limited to drug, alcohol, money laundering, and weapon violations. Aside from the criminal aspects, the toll that the fighting takes on the animals involved is nothing less than horrendous. Rehabilitation is expensive and difficult and many dogs must be euthanized as a result. Along with the felony charges that New Jersey holds for the crime of dog fighting, it should also include the penalty of being required in a registry. This registration process could be a law that is modeled after Megan's Law where sexual offenders must register in the area in which they reside. Our idea has been sent to two senators from the state of New Jersey in order to complete our service project.

Video Link

Dog Fighting: Raising Awareness to the Issue:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGNB2MzTXmo&fmt=18>

The Issue: Dog Fighting

Domestic Breeding

As science has proven, all dogs are descendants of wolves. The original breeds of dogs were “low-slung, massive dogs with very powerful builds, large heads and a tremendously threatening voice.” Ancient civilizations raised and tamed the wolf pups and interbred them to create the domesticated dogs we currently have today. Each breed was developed in certain geographic areas according to the specific traits that were needed in those areas. Just as these dogs were interbred for specific traits, so are the fighting dogs of today. The dogs are interbred to isolate certain body types and temperaments that are needed in a “good fighting dog”, which includes their aggression toward other dogs, but loyalty to their handlers. The fighting dogs of today, known collectively as pit bulls (after the pits they fight in) are the American pit bull terrier and the Staffordshire terrier; this also includes pit mixes, where a pit bull is crossed with another breed of dog. Pit bulls were traditionally known to be hunting companions, protectors, members of the police department, family pets and most affectionately “nursemaid’s” dogs because of their friendly demeanor toward children.

History

The brutal sport of animal fighting is thought to have started in the Coliseum during the Roman Era, where they would pit dogs against each other and other animals such as bears or bulls. Animal fighting, such as bull and bear baiting continued in England until the Humane Act of 1835 outlawed the bull and bear-baiting aspect of the sport. Bulls had become more expensive by this time anyway, which leads to the beginning of modern dog fighting, and also the Staffordshire terrier.

Dog fighting was brought to American soil around 1817 and it rapidly became part of the American culture. Originally it was backed by the United Kennel Club, which has a list of rules and regulations and also employed referees to judge the fights. Though it became largely illegal in the United States by the 1860s, it continued to grow in popularity through the twentieth century as an underground pastime. It became so popular, in fact, that in 1881 the Ohio and Mississippi railroads had special fares for traveling to dog fights in Louisville to see Lloyd’s Pilot and Crib (owned by “Cockney” Lloyd and Louis Krieger, respectively). Kit Burns’ tavern, the Sportsman’s Hall in Manhattan, hosted regular dog and rat fighting matches; this is probably what fixed dog fighting in the American culture for the long haul.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the UKC and other groups revoked their endorsement of the fights, which pushed the sport further underground. By 1976, it was outlawed in all states. It is now considered a felony in all states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

Types of Dog Fighters

There are three groups of dog fighters, professional, hobbyist and street fighters.

Professional

Professional fighters are the most highly organized group of dog fighters, which makes it hard for law enforcement to catch them. Participants and spectators are often not told where the venues are until a short time before the fight begins. Large amounts of money are often exchanged in this group. They tend to publish journals that include recent fight statistics, such as the winners and losers, advertisements for training equipment and puppies and their bloodlines. These journals are distributed around the world and have even begun working on the internet to get in touch with one another. Since the professional group is more dispersed than any other group, they travel often for fights. They make their living off of breeding, training, fighting and betting on the fights. These fighters use the “Cajun Rules” when fighting their dogs. The Cajun Rules were created in the 1950s by a Louisiana police chief named G.A. Trahan. There are nineteen rules, one of which states, “Should the police interfere, the referee is to name the next meeting place.”

Hobbyist

Because hobbyist or enthusiasts are not as well organized or wealthy as the professional fighters, hobbyists tend to remain in a specific area and do not travel for fights. They are well acquainted with each other because of this lack of travel. They may appear to be highly respected in the community, but have an extensive criminal background. They also often return to specific fighting venues repeatedly.

Street

This group is the most vicious of the three groups. They do not use dog fighting as way to make money, but as a status symbol. These fights are much less organized, often occurring in an alley or on the street. This group has the closest link to the criminal underground because of the various criminal activities that occur at these fights. The fights are spontaneous, possibly instigated by someone saying his dog was better than some other person's. This is the group that is growing the fastest. Children are now getting into the culture, raising the dogs and fighting them on street corners as a way to gain respect like they have seen others get respect. This group treats their dogs the worst because they are so desensitized from this culture that they see the dogs as completely and utterly disposable. There are no champion bloodlines in these dogs; there is a high possibility that they do not even have names. The dogs used in these fights are bought for a couple hundred dollars, bred by the fighters or stolen.

Spectators

These are obviously not fighters, but they should be mentioned anyway. This group has quite a large range of people, from hardcore criminals and high profile people to law enforcement to families with children. All walks of life are included in this group. Parents take their children to show them that this is the only way to get ahead, earn respect so no one will mess with you. The most surprising is that of law enforcement. It is hypocritical because they are the ones who are supposed to be protecting the dogs and children from this side of life, not participating in it themselves.

Training

Training of fighting dogs starts very young and lasts about two years. It starts by obtaining a dog by any means necessary, such as adopting, stealing or buying them. Champion bloodline puppies can cost upwards of one thousand dollars. One breeder's dogs went for over ten-thousand dollars each.

The training includes such objects as:

1. Treadmills: Running increases cardiovascular fitness and endurance
2. Pools: The dogs are forced to tread water, sometimes for hours at a time
3. Catmill/Jenny: Similar to a carnival horse walker, a dog is latched to one of the rotating poles, while a bait animal is hung or harnessed to another one of the poles. The dog runs in circles trying to chase the bait, which they are usually rewarded with at the end of the session.
4. Springpoles: The dog jumps up and dangles by its mouth from the hanging object for extended periods of time. This strengthens the jaw muscles and back legs.
5. Chains: These are often used instead of a collar and leash, they build neck and upper body strength.
6. Weights: These are usually attached to the chains and dangle from the dog's neck. This also builds neck and upper body strength from carrying them around.
7. Bait: Animals, such as cats or rabbits, which are tied up while the dogs rip it apart. They can be chased or confined while the dog tries to attack it.
8. Drugs/Vitamins/Supplements: These are given to the dog to condition them for a fight. The most commonly used are: iron, B-12, Provim, Magnum supplement, testosterone and other hormones, weight-gain supplements, creatine monohydrate, speed, steroids and cocaine.

Along with being pumped full of supplements and running 30 mph on a treadmill, the dogs are also trained against each other or more experienced dogs. The dogs are incited

to lunge at each other and participate in short fights called “bumps” or “rolls,” which last about 10 minutes, followed by a second longer fight. The survivors are chained again for a few more months until they are deemed ready for a “show” also known as a dog fight. To increase their effectiveness, the dog’s teeth may be sharpened to points and their ears cut off (to keep the opponent from latching on), or putting roach poison into their food to make their fur taste bad.

Bait Animals

Bait animals are those that are used to train the fight dogs to attack. They are often small animals, such as cats or rabbits, but can also be larger animals such as other non-fighting dogs. These other dogs have had their teeth ground down or their muzzles taped shut so that they cannot defend themselves from an attack. They are often allowed to be killed by the dog who is training. If they are not killed by the dog, they are often left to die alone. These animals lose eyes, noses, ears, limbs. Some wounds are so infected that the animals may have to endure many surgeries to fix the wounds.

Only a few of these animals survives the traumatic experience that is being used as bait. One of these survivors is Oogy, a Dogo Argentino, who was used as bait at the tender age of about four months. He suffered extensive injuries to his skull and face, including having blood vessels ripped from his head and a broken jaw. He made a completely turn around when he was adopted by Larry Levin, who along with his twin sons and his wife, have given him a family. Though he has healed, Oogy is missing his left ear and his face is tighter on the left side because of the number of surgeries he had to go through to fix the injuries caused by the dog in training. Larry Levin wrote Oogy, the dog only a family could love, about Oogy and how the Levin family has changed since they adopted Oogy.

The Fight

Fight venues can be outside or a variety of indoor locations, such as barns, garages, warehouses, and basements or abandoned buildings. The actual fighting takes place in a “pit” that can range anywhere from eight to twenty square feet with two to three foot high walls.

Before the fight, handlers wash their opponent’s dog to make sure the dog’s coat is not covered by any slick substances or poison, as specified by the Cajun Rules. The dogs are then taken to the scratch lines or the starting lines on each side of the pit. If this is a professional fight the referee would call the beginning of the fight and the dogs would be released. After the fighting begins, handlers are allowed to shout to their dogs, but are not allowed to interfere. If a dog turns away from its opponent, a “turn” is called and the referee stops the fight. The dogs are taken to their handlers. The dog that turned is then let go while the other is held by its handler. If the released dog runs across and attacks the other dog, the fight continues until one of them cannot fight any longer, jumps out of the ring, refuses to fight, gets severely injured or dies, or the fight gets interrupted by the police. If however, the dog does not attack the other dog, the fight is ended and the

winner is announced. These fights can continue for hours and the results are usually severe injury, or death for one or both of the animals.

If a dog loses, many handlers and/or owners will kill it. Usually by any means necessary, which includes but is not limited to torturing, hanging, beating, and shooting, electrocution, drowning or burning. If dogs do survive the fight, they are usually maimed or die from blood loss, dehydration or infection. Injured dogs are not taken to a veterinary clinic; they are sown back up by people who possess no legitimate skills of first aid. Dogs have actually been found to have been stapled back together and this probably without the use of an anesthetic.

Rehabilitation

Most of the dogs rescued from Michael Vick's Bad Newz Kennel have been rehabilitated, which means they spent months being evaluated before being fostered out and eventually adopted. Rescued fighters are analyzed by animal behaviorists, trainers and other qualified animal professionals. The dogs are tested with other dogs, then other animals such as cats. Then they are tested with child-sized dolls and eventually children. This helps to determine whether or not the dogs can be placed with other dogs, small animals, or children. Once they have been evaluated, the dogs are then placed with foster families, who begin to train them in normal commands, such as sit, stay, heel, down, etc. According to Jim Gorant's book, The Lost Dogs, the rescued dogs that stayed at the Best Friends Sanctuary in Utah, all rescued dogs need to pass their American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen Program. Many have gone on to become therapy dogs, which means they have passed the tests that allow them to go into hospice programs and hospitals and cheer up the patients. The dogs allow ill patients to open up, about their childhoods, their own pets, and other memories that seeing a dog unlocks.

The Service Project

Legal Aspects of Dog Fighting

Dog fighting is not solely animal cruelty. Dog fighting can also lead to additional criminal charges such as child endangerment, illegal gambling, conspiracy, money laundering, illegal practice of veterinary medicine, and operating a kennel without a license.

Many other criminal charges seem to be frequently connected to individuals involved in dog fighting. This includes charges related to drugs and alcohol, weapon violations, gang involvement, and even assault and homicide.

Dog Fighting Laws in the U.S.

Statutory Citation § 4:22-24:

Fighting or Baiting Animals or Creatures and Related Offenses

Below is a link to the definition of § 4:22-24 from the Animal Legal & Historical Center:
http://www.animallaw.info/statutes/stusnjst4_22_15_57.htm#s24

Three Types of Dog Fighting Offenses

1. Dog fighting
2. Spectator at a dog fight
3. Possession of dog(s) for fighting purposes

State Laws

Dog fighting is illegal and a felony in all fifty states, the District of Colombia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. Fines and jail time are both possible outcomes.

The attendance of a dog fight is a felony in most states. It is a misdemeanor in Oklahoma, Georgia, Kentucky, Kansas, Minnesota, Tennessee, Indiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Idaho, Utah, Alaska, Iowa, Maine, North Dakota, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Maryland, California, South Dakota, Wyoming, West Virginia, Nevada, New York, and Texas. It is legal in the states Montana and Hawaii.

The possession of a dog for fighting purposes is also a felony in most states. It is a misdemeanor in West Virginia, Nevada, New York, and Texas.

In New Jersey specifically, dog fighting, being a spectator at a dog fight, and possession of dogs for fighting purposes all carry the same degree of crime which is a crime of the third degree (which is equivalent to felony charges). Each carries a jail sentence of three to five years. Fines range from \$3,000 to \$5,000 for dog fighting while being a spectator and possession of a dog for fighting has a maximum fine of \$15,000.

Below is a link to a chart of the ranking of state dog fighting laws in the United States from 2010:

http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/animal_fighting/dogfighting_laws_ranked_110109.pdf

Federal Laws

The Animal Welfare Act of 1966: enforced the prohibition of certain animal fighting activities when individuals cross state lines or have involved interstate mail services to run the dog fighting crime.

Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act (May 2007): Shortly after the Michael Vick incident, this act was passed in order to amend the 1966 act. This act provides felony penalties for interstate activity related to dog fighting. Each violation will result in maximum fines of \$250,000 and jail time up to three years.

Breed Specific Legislation (BSL)

BSL is a term for laws which regulate or even ban specific breeds of dogs in an attempt to reduce dog attacks. These laws have been viewed as discriminatory and unfair and their success in reducing dog attacks has been questioned.

The focus of our issue concerns mostly pit bulls, as they are most commonly used in dog fights, but the BSL does not just attempt to regulate the American Pit Bull terrier breed.

The BSL has also included breeds such as American Staffordshire Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, English Bull Terriers, Rottweilers, American Bulldogs, Mastiffs, Dalmatians, Chow Chows, German Shepherds, Doberman Pinschers, or any mix of these breeds. Some BSL's even regulate or ban dogs that simply resemble these breeds.

The following states currently have State level laws that prohibit the passing of the BSL: Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia. While California's local municipalities are allowed to pass mandatory spay/neuter laws based on breed, they are not entitled to pass restrictions or bans based on breed.

The states not listed all have at least one or more city which has some type of specific BSL. For example, in the city of Travelers Nest, South Carolina, Rottweiler, Chow Chows, and Doberman dogs have all been banned.

Problems with Breed Specific Legislation

First and most importantly, BSL's are extremely costly and difficult to enforce. In Prince George's County in Maryland, it costs \$250,000 annually to enforce its BSL on Pit Bulls. "In 2003, a study conducted by the county on the ban's effectiveness noted that 'public safety is not improved as a result of [the ban],' and that 'there is no transgression committed by owner or animal that is not covered by another, non-breed specific portion of the Animal Control Code (i.e., vicious animal, nuisance animal, leash laws)'" (ASPCA, 2010).

The Center for Disease Control even decided not to support the BSL after they performed a thorough study on human fatalities resulting from dog bites. "The CDC cited, among other problems, the inaccuracy of dog bite data and the difficulty in identifying dog breeds (especially true of mixed-breed dogs). The CDC also noted the likelihood that as certain breeds are regulated, those who exploit dogs by making them aggressive will replace them with other, unregulated breeds" (ASPCA).

While the BSL indeed helps to limit dog fighting in these specific areas because ownership of these dogs is outlawed, most areas throughout the United States do not have regulations. Another issue with BSL would include the fact that the possibility of rescuing dogs within these areas would be impossible since ownership is not allowed. The United States should not further the outlawing of fighting dogs as they already have bad reputations as vicious animals.

Service Project Proposal

As just stated by the CDC, *people* train dogs to behave the way they do. Although a specific breed may have unfavorable dispositions, it is the way a dog is raised that makes it act worse. Therefore, there needs to be a law or bill passed which focuses on regulating the people, not breeds. The people who need to be regulated are animal abuse offenders and most importantly, dog fighting offenders. This is where our idea for the service project comes into play.

There needs to be a public registry of all dog fighting and animal abuse criminals. This registration process could be modeled after Megan's Law where sexual offenders must register in the area in which they reside.

Below is a link which will direct one to the information about Megan's Law where the executive summary can be located:

<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/meganslaw.pdf>

Legal Actions by States

Task forces made up of law enforcement officers, animal control, animal welfare groups, veterinarians, public health officials, housing authorities, and the neighborhood watch is important in order to address the problem of dog fighting within the state so that legal action can be made.

In some states, veterinarians are required to document and report suspicion of dog fighting when presented with an animal with such injuries. Unfortunately, most dogs with such injuries are never taken to a veterinarian.

Dog fighting is an extremely difficult crime to enforce. These crimes are often very organized events with controlled attendance and locations that are revealed very shortly before a fight takes place.

When considering the types of people which are involved in dog fighting, both law enforcement and animal control jurisdictions must work together. Armed law enforcement individuals are needed for safety while animal control individuals are needed for animal experience. Both departments are extremely important in handling a raid or sting.

Dog fighting laws are becoming increasingly stricter, especially after the recent charges brought against football star Michael Vick.

Celebrities Associated with Dog Fighting

The glorification of dog fighting has been making the issue worse. The youth within our country look up to celebrities as role models, and may perceive fighting dogs as being cool or popular. Raising popularity of this "sport" is cruel and unfair to these animals and needs to be stopped. The following list shows the celebrities who have been doing so and details on how.

1. Michael Vick

This football star ran a dog fighting ring from his home in Virginia where more than 50 pit bulls were seized.

2. Jay-Z

The music video for Jay-Z's song "99 Problems" shows dogs preparing for a fight. Below is a link to this video where the dogs fighting can be seen at the 3 minutes and 10 second mark (3:10).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwoM5fLITfk>

3. DMX

In his rap song "Dog Match," DMX raps about dog fighting.

"...I'mma put the bitch down,
cause the boy got rabies,
All my pups is crazy, cause off the leash,
They can eat, stand a match for 3 hours at least,
And if the beast is in the big one,
The beast is in the little ones..."

4. Qyntel Woods

This NBA player once abandoned a pit bull that appeared to have been involved in dog fighting.

5. Even Nike alluded to dog fighting in a TV commercial, showing two dogs seemingly gearing up to fight.

Agencies Helping to Combat Dog Fighting

ASPCA

The ASPCA Humane Law Enforcement Department is responsible for enforcing New York City's animal cruelty laws. They play a huge role in raising the awareness of dog fighting and animal cruelty.

Pet-Abuse.Com

Pet-Abuse.com is a website which makes an attempt to keep track of all dog fighting citations. They have created a database with hundreds of offenders.

Humane Society of U.S.

The Humane Society of the U.S. plays a huge role in raising awareness to the issue of dog fighting by providing online information for individuals interested in the matter.

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Amend Public Law § 4:22-24

New Jersey Dog Fighting Laws

To:

Senator Jeff Van Drew, District 21 (Essex, Morris, Somerset and Union)

Senator Tomas Kean, District 1 (Cape May, Atlantic and Cumberland)

The purpose of this letter is to have legislation introduced to draft an amendment to Public Law § 4:22-24 to include the requirement of all dog fighting criminals to be included in a public registry. The felony crimes which include dog fighting, spectator at a dog fight, and possession of dogs for fighting should all have this added penalty in the state of New Jersey.

This registration process could be modeled after Megan's Law where sexual offenders must register in the area in which they reside. I propose this be called Lucas's Law after a dog rescued from Michael Vick's property in Virginia. Lucas, one of Vicks champion fighters, was one dog whom was so prone to fighting that the court ordered that he spend the rest of his life at a shelter (Source: *The Lost Dogs*, 2010).

The objective of this amendment is to keep dog fighting criminals from: obtaining/purchasing dogs for fighting purposes, maintaining kennels or dog fighting areas, or participating as a spectator. This would be possible because breeders, law enforcement, and animal control would all have the power to monitor individuals in the registry, as would the rest of the public.

This added penalty would be extremely beneficial if one considers the fact that dog fighting has been associated with many other serious crimes which include gambling, drug dealing, weapons offenses, and money laundering. It can also involve endangerment of a child if present at a fight. Finally, people associated with dog fighting will steal pets in order to acquire bait animals which are a huge part of the dog fighting process (Source: Animal Legal Defense Fund, February 2009). The ability to monitor dog fighting criminals would in turn help to monitor other illegal activities.

Our proposed idea could either be implemented into the existing current New Jersey dog fighting law, or an entirely new bill that could be created which could include not only dog fighting criminals, but all animal abuse criminals. This would cover a much larger population of individuals to surveillance.

Due to your interests in dog fighting crimes and your legislation dealing with such, it was appropriate to contact you in this matter. I hope that you see fit to introduce such legislation.

Sincerely,

Kate Walmsley and Caitlin Kolb

Located below are two links which are of importance to this matter. Link one will direct you to “Megan’s Law: A Review of State and Federal,” where the executive summary of the bill can be located by using the index. The second link will direct you to the definition of §4:22-24.

<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/meganslaw.pdf>

http://www.animallaw.info/statutes/stusnjst4_22_15_57.htm#s24

Editorials

Caitlin Kolb: Editorial

Pit Bull Rehabilitation

Pitt bulls collected during a raid for drugs or dog fighting may or may not have behavioral problems, aggression issues or be the most angelic animal you have ever met, but unless they are taken in by rescues, their lives are probably over. Pit bulls are known to be favored by dog fighters, punks and gang members, which could possibly explain why no one is willing to take them in and give them a chance. Everyone takes these dogs and their breed at face value, or in this case, muzzle value. Some people and communities do not trust pit bulls because of their stained history of violence. They ban this breed from their neighborhoods without ever really knowing what sweet animals they can be. Pit bulls do not get a chance to tell their side of the story, of how they have been abused or neglected, or that they want to be taken in by people who will love them, let alone feed them regularly.

Pit bulls used in dog fights are trained to fight to the death, but the media never seems to pay attention to the dogs after the raid occurs. They may appear to be cold blooded killers, but on most occasions, they are scared and do not understand what is happening. Also, dogs who have been neglected probably have no good memories of the people that “took care of them,” so they may be a little apprehensive, skittish or fearful, which people could assume to mean that they would attack without any kind of provocation.

After they are taken to a shelter or rescue, they are put through the dog version of therapy to better understand their mental state. Over a certain period of time, the dogs are watched to look for signs of aggression and tested with other animals to see whether or not they are good with other dogs, cats, children, etc. If the dog passes the tests, they are either sent to foster families until they can find responsible, qualified dog owners or directly adopted out. By qualified, I do not mean they have had dogs before, but that they have owned and worked with dogs in the rehabilitation process. The foster families work with the dogs to help them overcome their fears and emotional issues, which restores their confidence and trust in humans. For instance, many of the dogs that eagles player, Michael Vick, had in his kennel in Virginia were successfully rehabilitated and became therapy dogs. Sadly, some rescued dogs may be too aggressive towards people or other animals to be successfully rehabilitated and may stay the rest of their lives with rescues or euthanized.

The rehabilitation of previously abused pit bulls may take some time and effort, but the overwhelming love loyalty and attention you receive in return is definitely worth it.

Kate Walmsley: Editorial

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As uncommon as dog fighting may seem, communities all across the country must be vigilant in raising awareness to the issue. According to the ASPCA, dog fighting arrests in the United States have numbered in the thousands between 2003 and 2008. There are certainly many more cases that are never discovered. The types of people involved in dog fighting or those who participate in the audience are a diverse group not limited to urban settings. Other illegal crimes that are associated with dog fighting include but are not limited to drug, alcohol, money laundering, and weapon violations. Aside from the criminal aspects, the toll that the fighting takes on the animals involved is nothing less than horrendous. Rehabilitation is expensive and difficult and many dogs must be euthanized as a result.

Currently, in the state of New Jersey, if an individual is involved in dog fighting, attends as a spectator, or is in possession of dogs used for fighting they can be charged with a 3rd degree Felony. If convicted, they can be jailed for three to five years with maximum fines of 15,000 dollars.

Considering the lure of dog fighting and the possibility of making large amounts of money in a small amount of time, there isn't much to stop people from continuing in the process after they have been convicted. I propose that any individual who has been convicted of dog fighting or possession of dogs for fighting, once they have served their time, they should have to register within the community they reside in so that law enforcement agencies and animal control officers could monitor them and ensure the individuals are not re-entering the dog fighting arena. This registration process could be a law that is modeled after Megan's Law where sexual offenders must register in the area in which they reside. I propose this be called Lucas's Law after a dog rescued from Michael Vicks property in Virginia. Lucas, one of Vicks champion fighters, was one dog whom was so prone to fighting that the court ordered that he spend the rest of his life at a shelter. He is one of the lucky dogs. If he had not been one of Michael Vick's famous dogs, most likely he would have been euthanized. Lucas's Law will help to decrease the amount of dog fighting in the United States, along with the other criminal activities it is associated with.

I urge everyone to write their congressmen and senators and ask them to support laws that limit dog fighting as well as trying to institute a law similar to the one I proposed. As unfortunate as Michael Vick's connection with dog fighting was, it brought to light the importance of continuing to fight against dog fighting.