

# Pet Store Preemption Bill: An Attack on Local Governments & Animal Welfare

In response to local ordinances prohibiting the sale of puppy mill puppies in pet stores, a front group for the pet store chain, Petland, and their lobbyists are going state-to-state, asking lawmakers to pass preemption bills to prohibit local regulation of pet stores and void existing ordinances. These bills, commonly disguised as animal welfare bills, are often deceiving and harmful towards animals and consumers.

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## Pet store preemption robs local governments of their ability to respond to local issues.

Preemption strips away the right of local governments to set standards for puppy-selling pet stores even though they pose a host of problems at the local level. Puppy-selling pet stores often lie about where their puppies come from, sell sick puppies to consumers, sell puppies that make people sick, and utilize predatory lending schemes to sell overpriced puppies. Additionally, local government has the burden of managing pet overpopulation and local tax dollars are spent housing and euthanizing dogs. Pet store regulation may be a key aspect of this management and as such should remain a local decision.

## Pet store preemption protects puppy mills and their retail sales outlets.

It is well-documented by anyone outside the industry that puppy mills supply pet stores with puppies. Preemption bills ensure that the puppy mill-to-pet store pipeline stays intact by forcing localities to allow the sale of puppy mill puppies in their communities. This outdated, socially unacceptable business model has been rejected by most pet stores across the country. Instead, these stores operate a humane business model by selling quality products and services rather than puppies that were bred in cruel, inhumane conditions.

## Pet store preemption subjects consumers to predatory lending schemes used to sell overpriced puppies.

Pet stores around the country have been exposed for using lending schemes that many would consider predatory to sell puppies that can cost as much as \$4,000. This practice targets low-income consumers who unintentionally sign-up to make costly, extended payments that can add up to twice the sticker price of the puppy.

Pet store preemption endangers localities by increasing the possibility of exposure to the drug-resistant disease, *Campylobacter* (see Humane Pet Store Bill Fact Sheet).

## Pet store preemption is an extreme measure to protect a dwindling business model.

As exemplified by PetSmart, PetCo and most mom-and-pop shops, pet stores do not have to sell puppies to stay in business. In 2018 pet market was a \$72 billion industry and every category including food, products and services saw an increase in revenue *except* for live animal sales, which industry experts predict will continue to decline.

Pet store preemption exposes consumers to deceptive business tactics used to sell puppies that are often sick. Aware of the public's disfavor toward puppy mills, many pet stores quell consumer concern by assuring them their puppies only come from USDA licensed breeders. However, a USDA license does not guarantee humane treatment of animals. When consumers bring these puppies home, they are often burdened with high vet bills and in many cases, puppies have died shortly after purchase.

## Pet store preemption is backed by Petland.

Petland, an Ohio-based corporation and the only national puppy-selling pet store chain, has been pushing preemption bills around the country with limited success. In 2018 they backed bills in Georgia, Florida and Michigan, all of which were defeated. So far in 2019, preemption efforts have stalled or been defeated in Oklahoma, Nebraska, Tennessee, Kentucky, Kansas, Alabama, West Virginia and Florida.

Petland's desire to protect its business model likely stems from the numerous lawsuits, investigations, negative news coverage, and upset consumers who have accused the company of knowingly selling sick puppies and sourcing their puppies from notorious, cruel puppy mills.