



**TESTIMONY ON MICHIGAN HB 5879**  
**Presented by Vicki Deisner, Midwest Legislative Director**  
**Before the House Judiciary Committee**  
**Wednesday, September 27, 2012**

Chairman Walsh and distinguished members of the House Judiciary Committee, on behalf of our approximately 2 million members and supporters nationwide, including over 60,000 Michigan citizens, I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony before this committee. My name is Vicki Deisner, and I am the Midwest Legislative Director for the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). I look forward to working with you on this and other issues. **The ASPCA strongly urges this committee to vote yes on HB 5879** – legislation that will facilitate the prosecution of dog fighting cases in Michigan.

Founded in 1866, the ASPCA is the first humane organization established in the Americas and serves as the nation's leading voice for animal welfare. We have a large grants program and thus far this year, we have already awarded over \$77,600 to 10 Michigan communities; last year we provided over \$150,000 to 10 Michigan communities.

The ASPCA's mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. The ASPCA has been committed to ending the brutal blood sport of dog fighting since the organization's inception. Henry Bergh, founder of the ASPCA, was repulsed by the brutality of dog fighting and worked to revise state cruelty laws to make all forms of animal fighting illegal. Today, the ASPCA incorporates information on blood sports in the animal cruelty training provided to police officers around the country, provides training on a national level to animal control officers and veterinarians on how to identify the signs of animal cruelty from dog fighting, as well as in crime scene investigations. In addition, the ASPCA regularly provides training and assistance to prosecutors on how to build an effective case against those charged with these crimes, and our experts often serve as witnesses in such cases.

There is no question that dog fighting is inhumane and cruel – resulting in the torture and death of both fighting dogs and dogs and other animals used as bait. But in addition, dog fighting, by its very nature, involves illegal gambling. Dogfighters often face additional charges related to drug, alcohol, and weapons violations as well as probation violations. Arguments over dog fights have also resulted in incidents that have led to charges of assault and even homicide. Other charges include conspiracy, corruption of minors, and money laundering. A study conducted by the Chicago Police Department found that 70% of those arrested for animal crimes had been arrested for other felonies, 65% had past arrests for battery, and 70% had been arrested for illegal narcotics. Dog fighting creates impacts the public safety in our communities.

There are various types of dog fighting that have emerged over the last century – street fighting, hobbyist, professional, and entertainers (Michael Vick). Street fighting, which is on the rise, occurs informally on a street corner, a back alley or on playgrounds. Street fighting creates a real public safety concern as these are spontaneous dog fighting events triggered by insults, turf invasions or the simple taunt – 'my dog can kill your dog'. Many people who participate in these fights lack even a semblance of respect for the animals, often starving and beating them to encourage aggressive behavior. Many of the dogs are bred to be a threat not only to other dogs, but to people as well – with tragic consequences. Dog fighting is truly a nuisance and danger in our communities.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, The ASPCA respectfully urges this committee to vote yes on HB 5879, legislation that would declare a building, vehicle, boat, aircraft used in the execution of a dog fighting event a nuisance. Thank you for your time and consideration.