We are a country of animal lovers. But our laws haven’t fully caught up.

As I write this, I am just back from New York, where I met with state legislators, and spoke to the New York City Bar Animal Law Committee as well as three law schools – Columbia Law School, Syracuse University College of Law, and Albany Law School – to promote a bill to overhaul New York’s outdated animal cruelty laws.

Bella’s Bill, supported by the Animal Legal Defense Fund and introduced by New York State Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal, is named in memory of a sweet mixed breed dog who was brutally beaten to death by her owner/guardian – the person who was supposed to love and protect her. Telling and retelling Bella’s story made me sorry that I didn’t get to know her while she was alive.

Because of New York’s weak anti-cruelty laws, Bella’s killer received just four months in the county jail for his crime. We are determined not to let this injustice be the end of Bella’s story. If her tragic death can be a catalyst for finally putting some teeth in New York’s animal protection laws, some small justice for her will finally be served.

Bella deserved better, in life and in the justice system. All animals need stronger legal protections. At the Animal Legal Defense Fund, we are fighting hard to make sure they get them.

We need your help to do it.
Thank you for supporting the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

For the animals,

Stephen Wells
Executive Director
Because of Bella:  
The Animal Legal Defense Fund Works to Strengthen Animal Protection Laws

BY ARIN GREENWOOD | SENIOR WRITER

There was no justice for Bella. The Animal Legal Defense Fund is working to ensure her legacy is stronger animal protection laws.

Bella was an 11-year-old dog, who was beaten to death by her supposed “caretaker.” On the afternoon of December 23, 2016, 56-year-old Michael Gallagher tied a zip tie around Bella’s neck, stuffed her into a garbage bag, and then hit her repeatedly with a shovel. The family’s neighbors in Levittown, Long Island, heard Bella’s cries and called the police. Gallagher fled. When Gallagher’s wife got home she took Bella to the veterinarian, but the dog was too severely injured to be saved. Bella was euthanized.

Police picked up Gallagher later that day. He was charged with one felony count of animal cruelty, and three misdemeanors. He received only four months in county jail.

This short sentence sparked outrage. It also sparked a major effort to overhaul New York’s outdated animal cruelty laws through Bella’s Bill — which would transfer animal cruelty laws into the Penal Code where other major crimes are housed, ensuring law enforcement officers receive training on related crimes. The Animal Legal Defense Fund is working closely with New York legislators to make Bella’s Bill into law.

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In addition to Bella’s Bill, our 2019 legislative priorities include the protection of orcas, and phasing out the keeping of orcas in captivity — including at SeaWorld, in Orlando. We are also working with New Jersey lawmakers to pass a law that gives animals a legal advocate in court. Modeled on Connecticut’s Desmond’s Law, Assemblywoman Annette Quijano’s bill, and a companion bill introduced by state Senator Nicholas P. Scutari, would allow lawyers and law students to attend hearings and present sentencing recommendations in animal abuse cases.

We work for stronger laws, and stronger enforcement of those laws.

We do it for Bella. So that her tragic death won’t have been in vain, but will mean safer communities, more protections, and more justice, for others. Learn more online at aldf.org/legislation.

This work in New York is a critical part of our mission as an animal protection organization. Across the country, we work at the state and local level advocating for laws that promote and protect the lives and interests of animals.

Last year, we helped pass a number of important legislative efforts. These include Proposition 12 in California, which sets minimum space requirements for confining farmed animals — now the strongest in the country — and bans the sale of animal products involving cruel confinement methods, even if produced in other states. In Florida, we helped pass Amendment 13, which ends greyhound racing throughout the state — making Florida the 41st state to ban commercial dog racing.

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As an attorney, Sejal Sanghvi is familiar with animals’ position in the legal system and the need to elevate their protections. Her personal interactions with animals, whether with her cat Ava or on a high school field trip to a factory farm, drive her to support. “I consider the Animal Legal Defense Fund to be on the absolute cutting edge of legal and policy advocacy for animals including its outstanding work in conducting creative and persistent litigation and advancing legislative change. I am extremely impressed with the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s impact litigation and effective lobbying for animal protection legislation. I also appreciate the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s broad scope — advocating for animals raised for food, wildlife, captive animals, companion animals, animals used in research, among others.”

Sejal Sanghvi

Sejal became a donor in 2015. To learn more about ways you can support the Animal Legal Defense Fund, visit aldf.org/support.
The Animal Legal Defense Fund is thrilled to partner with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges to address animal cruelty — this is the first formalized partnership between an animal protection organization and a national judicial group.

Earlier this year, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa struck down Iowa’s Ag-Gag law after the Animal Legal Defense Fund filed a lawsuit challenging the law’s constitutionality. Iowa’s law criminalized undercover investigations at factory farms, slaughterhouses, and puppy mills, stopping advocates from exposing animal cruelty and other legal violations. In March, with an appeal from the state pending, Iowa passed another Ag-Gag law with the same First Amendment violations as the first. We will be challenging Ag-Gag 2.0 as well. Federal courts have struck down similar Ag-Gag laws in Idaho and Utah. Litigation continues in Kansas and North Carolina. Learn more at aldf.org/aggag.

Publishing Farmed Animal Cruelty Prosecution Guides

The Animal Legal Defense Fund is developing a line of state-specific Farmed Animal Cruelty Prosecution Guides as tools to help prosecutors and law enforcement agents investigate and prosecute animal cruelty cases involving farmed animals. Each guide contains a comprehensive compilation of laws that protect farmed animals — and walks readers through how to use these laws to successfully pursue an animal cruelty case. Learn more about how the Animal Legal Defense Fund supports law enforcement online at aldf.org/criminaljustice.

Illinois and Florida guides are already complete.
California’s law banning the sale of foie gras went into effect in January after the Supreme Court denied the foie gras industry’s petition attacking the law’s constitutionality. The Animal Legal Defense Fund filed multiple amicus briefs in the multi-year legal battle. Additionally, we moved to resume our lawsuit against the Napa restaurant La Toque for attempting to circumvent the ban by serving foie gras as a “gift” as part of a tasting menu.

In 2012, the Animal Legal Defense Fund filed a lawsuit against the federal Food and Drug Administration for inspection reports of factory egg farms. The FDA produced the reports but censored important information about the living conditions of the hens. In a significant victory for transparency in factory farming, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California ordered the FDA to release nearly all of the challenged information.

SUING OVER ILLEGAL “PUPPY LAUNDERING” SCHEME

In March, we filed a lawsuit against a pet store and two outfits posing as animal “rescue groups” for engaging in a puppy laundering scheme designed to circumvent the California law that bans the retail sale of dogs from commercial breeders — commonly called puppy mills.

Our lawsuit alleges the Animal Kingdom pet store is illegally harming animals by using Bark Adoptions and Rescue Pets Iowa as middlemen to launder puppies commercially bred for profit at puppy mills and labeling them “rescue” animals. Animal Kingdom has been selling purebred and designer puppies for $2,000 and more into 2019. Learn more online at aldf.org/puppymills.