

February 17, 2009

Testimony by Carol Bradley
In favor of House Bill 548

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Mister chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to speak in favor of House Bill 548.

I am a former newspaper reporter in Great Falls. I'm here today because I am writing a book about a large puppy mill case Back East. I've spent three years researching the problems caused by puppy mills, and I applaud you for considering legislation that would help rein in this brutal industry.

The Camp Collie case in Shelby opened my eyes to the underbelly of the dog-breeding world. The Humane Society of the United States estimates there are 10,000 puppy mills in this country. They are most prominent in the mid-west, but Montana has them too. You've heard about recent huge cases in Billings and Butte. Puppy mills also exist in Craig, Stevensville, Hobson, Vaughn and Charlo. Those are the ones we know about. And every one of you has constituents back home who have unwittingly purchased a puppy mill dog from a pet store or over the Internet.

Why is this a bad thing? Dogs produced in puppy mills are victims of bad breeding and poor care. They are under-socialized and often ill: It's not uncommon for puppy mill dogs to die within days or weeks after families have brought them home. My veterinarian in Great Falls has several clients who bought a puppy at a local pet store only to discover the dog was diseased or dying. Last Sunday at church a woman stopped to tell me about a breeder on the west side of town who houses dogs in deplorable conditions. "What can we do about it?" my friend asked.

If House Bill 548 becomes law, that kennel would be inspected by the state veterinarian's office to make certain the dogs have adequate housing, aren't exposed to searing heat and cold, and are being treated humanely. This bill would actually save the state money because shoddily run commercial breeding operations are ticking time bombs. They can cost a local government tens of thousands of dollars to dismantle.

Please vote yes to House Bill 548. Thank you.