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Governor Quinn Signs Legislation to Protect Pets and Pet Owners throughout Illinois

New Laws Require Bitter Flavor to be Added to Automotive Antifreeze and Coolant; Ban Primates as Pets

CHICAGO – July 22, 2010. Governor Pat Quinn today signed two bills into law that increase protections for pets and pet owners throughout Illinois. The new laws will require the addition of a bitter flavor to antifreeze and engine coolant and prohibit private ownership of primates as pets. “As a pet owner, I know first-hand how important it is to protect these furry family members,” said Governor Quinn. “These new laws help pet owners fulfill our responsibility to keep our pets safe from harm and will prevent avoidable tragedies.”

House Bill 4722, sponsored by Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) and Sen. Linda Holmes (D-Aurora), requires the addition of a bitter flavoring agent to automotive antifreeze and coolant to prevent poisoning. Both products possess a sweet taste and can pose a hazard to pets, children and wildlife when spilled or left in open containers.

The Humane Society of the United States estimates that 90,000 animals are poisoned every year after ingesting ethylene glycol, the toxic substance used in automotive antifreeze and coolant. The legislation passed the Illinois General Assembly unanimously and takes effect on July 1, 2011. Illinois is now the 14th state to require a bittering agent in antifreeze.

House Bill 4801 prohibits the private ownership of primates as pets. The legislation was spurred by a tragic incident last year where a pet chimpanzee in Connecticut attacked a family friend of its owner. Keeping primates as pets also has serious public health and animal welfare implications. According to the Humane Society of the United States, primates are often powerful animals that can inflict serious injuries and spread life-threatening diseases. The average pet owner is unable to meet their basic social and physical needs in captivity.

The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Daniel Burke (D-Chicago) and Sen. Don Harmon (D-Oak Park). It passed the Illinois General Assembly nearly unanimously and takes effect Jan. 1, 2011. Under the new law, Illinois joins the 22 states that have banned the ownership of primates as pets.

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