

Our View: Banishing dog breeds is not state's top priority

Times Editorial Board

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The recent suggestion from a legislator that Minnesota ban five dog breeds considered dangerous, even deadly, is nothing more than a knee-jerk political reaction to an emotional and complex issue.

As such, we strongly urge other legislators ignore this proposal, which would make owning chow chows, wolf hybrids, pit bulls, Akitas or Rottweilers a misdemeanor crime punishable by up to 90 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Please don't take our objections to DFL Rep. John Lesch's idea as being supportive of dog fighting or training dogs to attack. Rather, we oppose the ban for two reasons — priorities and people.

Priorities

All Minnesotans, especially legislators, need look back only a month to see how many other, more pressing problems elected leaders either failed to resolve or did so in ways that have yet to make an impact.

The list is long — and perhaps even memorized now by civic-minded Minnesotans.

There remains no consistent, long-term funding solution to the state's multi-billion-dollar transportation needs. The formula for funding birth-to-12 public education remains broken — but still distributing hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Health-care costs and coverage issues pose unending challenges. And, oh yea, that all-encompassing tax-more-or-not matter.

Don't even get us started on sports stadiums, actual educational reform, social issues and the like.

While preventing dog attacks is a noble effort, Lesch's approach and the divisiveness it will cause just doesn't merit legislators' time, especially stacked against the above issues and knowing that similar legislation in other states spurred expensive and lengthy legal battles.

People

We also oppose Lesch's idea because it's a misleading solution. As several animal experts have noted, almost any dog can be trained to attack. So how will singling out these five breeds help?

Lesch clearly has never read author Alexandra Day's "Good Dog Carl" and related books, nor does he appear to know much about the temperament of German Shepherds, Dobermans or cocker spaniels — breeds known for aggressive, even vicious, responses yet not facing bans.

In addition, there are responsible people who need and deserve to have the option to train and use dogs as protection. Law enforcement, security companies and individuals worried about their safety.

Overall, if Lesch is serious about wanting to reduce dog attacks, we simply suggest he contact local authorities and urge them to enforce laws already in place that promote responsible pet ownership

and humane treatment of animals.

That won't add to legislators' workload and it's based on the reality that any breed of dog can be trained to attack.

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