

Dogs have been purpose bred for ages and they will continue to be produced for specific talents and characteristics – Doberman Pinschers were “invented” by Karl Friedrich Louis Doberman, a tax collector in Germany who needed a protective partner in the late 1800’s. All of the 330+ breeds worldwide - all wolf descendants – were produced in the same manner: intentionally bred for specific talents and characteristics. As a result, there are breeds of dogs with individually unique skills that can assist in nearly every human endeavor.

In the state of Oregon you don’t have to look too far to see the variety of public preferences in action. I travel to rural properties frequently in my work and have noticed that, compared to 30 or 40 years ago when rural dogs frequently ran without too much restriction, owners currently are as careful with their dogs as they are with their livestock, in terms of keeping them on their property and under control. They also reflect an unmistakable tendency to select dogs that match their rural activity or use of the property – meaning that the vast majority seek purpose-bred dogs with specific capabilities, talents, size, instinct, durability and behavior.

What does this have to do with HB2804? HB2804 effectively terminates commercial trade in purebred dogs – limiting public access to what is and has been a demonstrated demand for the specific kinds of dogs that commercial enterprises can produce. If this supply source is eliminated, it's worth noting that the purebred demand cannot be satisfied by local hobby breeders. The effect of this bill is analogous to going to the grocery store and discovering that the brand name soup or olives or coffee beans that you prefer have been removed from the shelf and replaced with house brand products.

But it’s really worse than that: Since we have gone from around 30 pet stores in the past to a grand total of 8 in the state currently, and because we have roughly the same rate of public demand for dog acquisition that we have had in the past, we now have thousands of dogs being imported to the state by rescuing entities. The pet stores are closely controlled by state and federal licensing, record-keeping and inspection standards. Rescue operations are not under the same regulatory scrutiny, and as to sources of the rescue dogs, a pipeline of supply has been created in response to the house pet demand, but the supply - or source - is veritable a grab bag of quality and health problems. Nationwide, we have clearly demonstrated the health hazards of Asian importation. Increasing the frequency and volume of out of state rescues creates the inevitability that additional foreign diseases and parasites will spill into our state as well (additional because it is already happening: Spokane and Seattle have heartworm issues that rank them in the top 10 in the country - issues that they did not have in the past and we in Oregon also have had to contend with the canine flu that has been traced by Cornell to South Korea).

This bill goes down the wrong path. It chokes out choice, eliminates competition from purebred commercial enterprises, and in the absence of serious regulation, increases the incidence of health problems already on the rise in the state.