



SENATOR MATT BARTLE

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Bills on Dangerous Dogs Heard in Senate Judiciary

JEFFERSON CITY — Last year when Steve and Kristi McBee from Buckner were attacked by a vicious bull mastiff while out for a jog around their neighborhood, they barely survived. If the dog could have found just a little more strength or if Steve hadn't decided to go running with his wife — he rarely did — the story's ending could have been much more tragic.

Instead, the couple is left with permanent wounds that serve as a reminder of the night their four boys almost lost their parents. Their scars tell of the desperate struggle with an animal intent on killing them both, an animal that had attacked before, putting a woman in the hospital and damaging her arm to the point where it will never fully recover.

This week in the Senate Judiciary Committee, the McBees had the opportunity to tell their story. The couple, along with their boys, came to the hearing to voice their support of my [Senate Bill 834](#). The legislation makes people immune from liability or criminal prosecution if they have a reasonable fear that they are in immediate danger of being harmed by a dog and manage to kill or injure the attacking animal in the process. It also strengthens the rights of citizens to protect their homes and property from a dog that repeatedly trespasses and makes them afraid for their safety. Tougher penalties are placed on the owners of vicious dogs who attack people or property, and authorities are authorized to destroy any dog that is a habitual attacker.

Unfortunately, dog attacks similar to what the McBees experienced are not isolated incidents. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Veterinary Medical Association, dog attacks cause 4.5 million injuries annually, 800,000 of which require medical attention. And with the dramatic increase in the number and popularity of so-called "power-bred" dogs in the last 15 years, the risk of vicious attacks is very real. The McBees' experience illustrates the needless pain an irresponsible dog owner can inflict.

Dogs are an important part of many American families, including my own — the expression "man's best friend" is very fitting. However, dogs are still animals and they must be

properly cared for and controlled by their owners. This bill I filed would help to ensure that members of the public are protected from and have the clear legal right to protect themselves and their families from such dangerous animals.

If you have any comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.