

CHAPTER 200**(SB 37)**

AN ACT relating to state symbols.

WHEREAS, the Treeing Walker Coonhound is a native Kentucky dog breed, developed in the 19th century by two Kentucky breeders, John W. Walker and George Washington Maupin, in Madison County; and

WHEREAS, the Treeing Walker Coonhound is a hunting breed known to chase quarry into trees, thus giving hunters a clear shot at game; and

WHEREAS, the Treeing Walker Coonhound is known for hunting raccoons, but is also used for hunting other game, including animals ranging in size from rodents to bears; and

WHEREAS, Treeing Walker Coonhounds are fast, sensible hunters with clear, ringing bugle voices; and

WHEREAS, Treeing Walker Coonhounds locate their quarry quickly by following the freshest scent available, and they exhibit superb endurance; and

WHEREAS, Treeing Walker Coonhounds are also great companion dogs, known for their loyalty and intelligence, kindness to children, and the ability to get along with other dogs; and

WHEREAS, the breed was originally known as the Walker Coonhound Treeing and was recognized by the United Kennel Club in 1905 as a part of the English Coonhound breed. The name was changed to Treeing Walker Coonhound as a separate breed in 1945; and

WHEREAS, the Treeing Walker Coonhound became a recognized breed of the American Kennel Club in January 2012, and referenced by the AKC as "the people's choice" among coonhounds; and

WHEREAS, animal shelters across the Commonwealth of Kentucky serve all 120 counties and care for tens of thousands of animals each year, most of which are dogs and cats being both purebred and mixed breeds; and

WHEREAS, more than 60,000 animals enter Kentucky shelters each year, placing substantial demands on local communities and their fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, increasing public awareness of animals in shelters or in the care of rescue organizations can lead to higher adoption rates for those purebred and mixed-breed animals; and

WHEREAS, many dogs, including breeds with deep Kentucky roots, purebreds, and mixed breeds alike, become loyal companions in homes across the Commonwealth of Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that as Kentucky designates an official state dog, that the General Assembly also recognizes the importance of promoting the adoption and responsible care of purebred and mixed-breed animals in shelters and in rescue organizations; and

WHEREAS, the eastern spotted skunk and eastern hellbender are native, nongame species historically present within Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, the eastern hellbender is classified as a species of greatest conservation concern, and the eastern spotted skunk is classified as a species of high conservation concern; and

WHEREAS, official recognition of these species promotes environmental education, conservation awareness, and appreciation of Kentucky's natural heritage without fiscal or regulatory impact;

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔SECTION 1. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 2 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

The Treeing Walker Coonhound is named and designated as the official state dog of Kentucky.

➔SECTION 2. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 2 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

Domestic cats (Felis catus) and dogs (Canis familiaris), both purebred and mixed breeds alike, that reside in or have been adopted from Kentucky animal shelters or rescue organizations are named and designated as the official pets of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

➔SECTION 3. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 2 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

The eastern spotted skunk (Spilogale putorius) is named and designated as the official state nongame mammal of Kentucky.

➔SECTION 4. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 2 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

The eastern hellbender (Cryptobranchus alleganiensis) is named and designated as the official state amphibian of Kentucky.

Signed by Governor April 27, 2026.