



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. David Boyer introducing

L.D. 80, An Act to Designate the Seppala Siberian Sleddog as the Maine State Dog

Before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

February 24, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and esteemed members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is David Boyer, and I am proud to present L.D. 80, An Act to Designate the Seppala Siberian Sleddog as the Maine state dog. Before you today is a grassroots group of Mainers in support of making the Seppala Siberian Sleddog a symbol for our state.

For nearly a century, Maine has played a pivotal role in the history and proliferation of these world-famous working dogs. When Leonhard Seppala and his team arrived at Poland Spring in 1927, people came from all over to meet Togo, the heroic dog that saved thousands. Togo retired in Poland Spring after Seppala and Elizabeth Ricker set up a kennel. These dogs powered through blinding snowstorms and bone-chilling cold to deliver life-saving serum during the 1925 diphtheria outbreak in Nome, Alaska—a feat of heroism that echoes the kind of tenacity we hold dear.

While that story unfolded far from our borders, the Seppala Siberian Sleddog's qualities align perfectly with Maine's own legacy of thriving in tough seasons and looking out for one another. Maine's own history of sled dogs as partners in labor and recreation reflects this. Their intelligence and loyalty make them more than companions—they are a symbol of the hardworking spirit we take pride in.

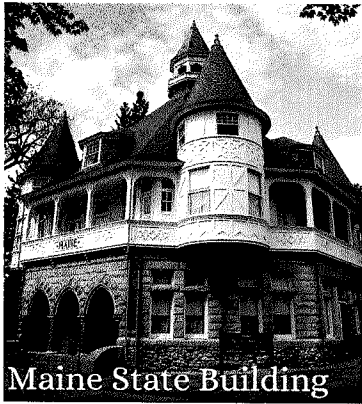
Now, some might wonder, “Why not choose a breed that is more commonly seen in our homes?” It’s a fair question, as Maine is home to many beloved dogs, each with its own charm. But the Seppala Siberian Sleddog stands apart—not because it’s common, but because it’s exceptional. This rare breed, with its storied past, aligns with our shared values of excellence through hard work and perseverance. Choosing it as our state dog doesn’t diminish other breeds—certainly not your own pup at home—but rather elevates a symbol that reflects our highest ideals.

While others may argue that bills designating a state dog are a trivial use of government resources, it’s hard to dispute the cultural and symbolic value of such a designation. Children in Maine schools could learn the history of our state dog and the epic tale of Togo. They would learn about the resiliency and teamwork our state dog symbolizes and why those character traits are worth celebrating.

This is a simple gesture that strengthens our connection to those who came before and serves as a unifying force in times of political division. I urge you to consider the historical, cultural, and symbolic importance of these exceptional dogs and to join me in affirming a proud piece of Maine's legacy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

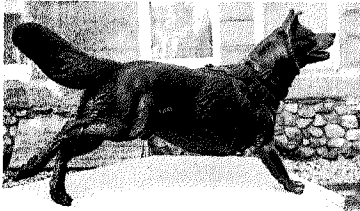
Poland Spring Preservation Society



Maine State Building

The Poland Spring Preservation Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that owns the Maine State Building and the All Souls Chapel and is dedicated to preserving the unique architecture of the two important Maine landmarks. We educate our visitors about Poland Spring including many contributions to Maine's economic and tourism history.

The Board of Directors of Poland Spring Preservation Society voted to unanimously support the naming of the Seppala Siberian Sleddog as the Maine State Dog.



Togo - Time Magazine the Most Heroic Animal of all time.
Artist David Smus

Poland Spring Preservation Society
PO BOX 444
Poland Spring, ME 04274



SEPPALA SIBERIAN SLEDDOGS

Proposed Maine State Dog



Centennial of the Great Race of Mercy

A century ago, a team of Seppala Siberian Sleddogs played a crucial role in rescuing the town of Nome, Alaska, by delivering a diphtheria vaccine via sled dog teams. Following their incredible achievement, they traveled across the contiguous United States, eventually reaching Poland Spring, Maine. It was here that the Poland Spring Kennel was established, and it became the retirement home for their most heroic dog, Togo.

An Act to Designate the Seppala Siberian Sleddog as the Maine State Dog

PRESENTED BY: _____
 (Representative DAVID WAYNE BOYER, JR.)
 TOWN: Poland

132LR0615(01)

PROPOSED SHORT TITLE:
 DESIGNATE THE SEPPALA SIBERIAN
 SLEDDOG AS THE MAINE STATE DOG
 (Subject to change)

Co- Sponsors

Sen. Sue Bernard

Republican from Aroostook County

Sen. Rick Bennett

Republican from Oxford County

Sen. Bruce Bickford

Republican from Androscoggin County

Rep. Mark Blier

Republican from Buxton

Rep. David Woodsome

Republican from Waterboro

Rep. Lucien Daigle

Republican from Ft. Kent

Rep. Mark Babin

Republican from Ft. Fairfield

Rep. Nina Milliken

Democrat from Blue Hill

Rep. Laura Supica

Democrat from Bangor

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Find out more information about the initiative to make Maine's State Dog the Seppala Siberian Sleddog



<https://polandspringps.org/seppala-siberian-sleddog-2/>



TOWN OF POLAND

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Poland, ME 04274
www.polandtownoffice.org
(207) 998-4601



January 7, 2025

Maine State House
2 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Maine State Legislators,

The Town of Poland strongly supports the initiative to make the Seppala Siberian Sled Dog the Maine State Dog. We believe this would celebrate a significant aspect of our heritage and foster a sense of community and State pride.

Given Maine's rich history of winter sports, selection of the Seppala Siberian Sled Dog, specifically recognizing Togo, the renowned sled dog, as our State Dog is appropriate. Togo's bravery and endurance in delivering diphtheria medicine to Nome, Alaska in 1925 exemplifies the spirit of resilience and perseverance that we as Mainers hold dear.

A statue of Togo located at the Maine State Building in Poland proudly demonstrates the importance and affection that the community has for this dog.

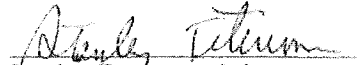
Seppala Siberian Sled Dogs are known for their strength, loyalty, and ability to thrive in harsh conditions, reflecting the rugged beauty of our great State. They have played a vital role in the development of our winter sports industry and have been cherished companions to many.

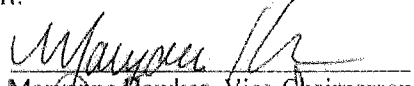
Honoring Togo and selecting the Seppala Siberian Sled Dog as our State Dog celebrates the important role these dogs have played in our history and recognizes their ongoing contributions to our State.

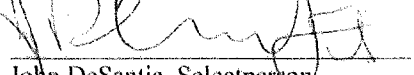
Selection of the Seppala Siberian Sled Dog as the Maine State Dog would recognize the history and spirit of our great State. We strongly support this effort.


Steve Robinson, Chairperson


Lisa Albee, Selectperson


Stanley Tetelman, Selectperson


Marianne Hawkes, Vice-Chairperson


John DeSantis, Selectperson