

# DeWine calls for changes in Ohio dog laws: 'We have to hold people more accountable'

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Gov. Mike DeWine is calling for changes to Ohio's dog laws following publication of an eight-month investigation by The Enquirer, Columbus Dispatch, Akron Beacon Journal and Canton Repository into dog attacks and weaknesses in state laws.

"The [story you all did](#) was very good, it was very sad, it was very scary. We clearly have to do something. We have to hold people more accountable," DeWine said on Friday.

He did not offer specifics but said "it's something that I have every confidence this legislature is going to take up because the story was very compelling. I think it was very moving to hear from [the victims](#). This has to change. We have to do better in the state of Ohio."

Dogs attack about 17,000 people a year in Ohio. [Experts estimate](#) the actual total is double that, because so many attacks go unreported. In some cases, victims experience [disfigurement](#), [amputations](#), [psychological trauma](#) and huge medical bills. Dog owners often pay minimal fines and face only misdemeanor charges.

State Rep. Kevin Miller, R-Lancaster, said he is working on [a reform bill](#) that will give dog wardens more tools and eliminate a provision in current law that allows dogs to kill two humans before it must be euthanized. Miller said he's hesitant to increase criminal penalties for dog owners because that idea may kill the reform bill.

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, a Republican running for governor in 2026, said: "Your pet choice is not as important as the lives of the people that have been attacked. I'm for treating this as a serious criminal offense."

Yost favors crafting the dog laws to mirror motor vehicle law.

“For the same reasons that we hold people accountable for what happens with their cars, particularly if they are doing things that aggravated that, I think we ought to have a similar regimen of serious offenses,” Yost said.

Legislation to reform Ohio dog laws hasn't been introduced since 2019.

Ohio House Speaker Matt Huffman, R-Lima, said his focus is on the state budget right now and changing the dog laws is a "low priority" at the moment.

*Staff writers Erin Glynn and Jessie Balmert contributed to this report.*