

Government Relations Staff Updates

As part of an ongoing restructuring of the AKC Government Relations Department designed to better partner with you in impacting canine legislation and public policy, we are pleased to share updates about GR staff.

Beginning last year, Melissa Ferrell was promoted to Research Analyst. Melissa oversees AKC GR research and online communications, including development and administration of the AKC GR Legislative Action Center. In her previous role, Melissa introduced and implemented new data analysis software and was also instrumental in the coordination of an interactive web site designed for AKC's grassroots members to easily communicate with their legislators. She also creates, designs, and maintains relational databases dealing with legislative issues that impact dog owners on local, state and federal government levels. Melissa holds a B.A. in Political Science.

Phil Guidry has been promoted to Director, Policy Analysis. Phil gained his first experience with AKC as a summer intern in 2002. After receiving his law degree from Loyola University-New Orleans, he returned to AKC in 2006 as a member of the Internal Consulting Group. Phil has served as Government Relations' Sr. Policy Analyst since July 2011. Previous positions he has held with AKC include Legislative Analyst and Director of Registration Development.

Jennifer Clark has been promoted to Director, Legislative Outreach. Jennifer has worked in the government relations field for almost 15 years. She joined the AKC Government Relations team in 2009, serving first as GR Administrator, and more recently as Manager, Canine Legislation. Prior to joining the AKC, Jennifer worked as a lobbyist in Phoenix, Arizona, where she advocated on a broad range of issues, worked on statewide ballot measure campaigns, conducted grassroots advocacy trainings, and handled much of the public and media relations on behalf of clients.

Patty Van Sicklen has been Promoted to Regional Manager for the Southeast region. Patty has been involved in AKC events, clubs, and legislative issues for more than 25 years. Before working for the AKC, she helped found a state coalition of dog clubs, worked to oppose local anti-breeder measures, and served as a media contact and spokesperson on responsible dog care. Patty came to the AKC in 2007 as a member of the Internal Consulting Group, and joined the Government Relations team in 2010 as a Legislative Analyst. In January 2017, Patty became the first field staffer for the GR team, overseeing legislative issues in the Southeast. Patty previously worked in economic development for Williamson County, TN, and as National Director of Business Operations, trainer, analyst, and speaker in the office suites industry.

We are also pleased to introduce two new staff:

Nathan Makla has joined the GR team as Administrator. Nathan comes to AKC from the Heartland Institute in Chicago, where he worked as a State Government Relations Manager. He also worked in a federal affairs department for an energy company in DC. Prior to working in the energy sector, Nathan was a government affairs intern for the American Forest and Paper

Association; a Senate aide for the 2011 session of the Georgia General Assembly; and a legislative aide for the Science and Technology Committee. Nathan is a graduate of Clemson University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics.

Christina Wickson is the new GR Coordinator. Christina transferred to Government Relations from Event Services. Prior to working for AKC, Christina worked in a number of community outreach and analysis/reporting positions with local and state government entities including: with the state of Connecticut Judicial branch, as a police officer, and with NC State University. Christina holds a BA in Middle Eastern Studies and Business Administration from Fordham University and a Masters in International and Security Studies from NC State University.

Individual responsibilities within the GR team are structured by function and geography. The department is overseen by Sheila Goffe, Vice President, Government Relations.