



Claudine Wilkins

Animal Law Expert, Founder of The Animal Protection Society and Animal Law Source

Claudine Wilkins is a former prosecutor and renowned animal law expert. She is the founder of The Animal Protection Society (TAPS), Animal Law Source (ALS), the Animal Protection Conference & Expo (APCE), and past chair of the State Bar of GA's Animal Law Section.

She is the author of *How to Investigate and Prosecute Animal Cruelty*, numerous articles and is a contributing author for Pet Life Magazine. Claudine is also a frequent speaker in Georgia, nationally and internationally.

Claudine is committed to turning the next generation into animal protectors, fighting animal cruelty, and increasing the awareness of "the link" between human crimes and animal crimes, puppy mills, dogfighting, animal abuse, pet overpopulation, dog bite prevention and other animal-related causes.

TAPS, founded in 2010, evolved after 30 years of working in animal related cases. Since the 1993, Claudine has forged a trail in animal protection and changed how their justice system responds to animal cruelty cases. She is "the statewide resource" for all GA prosecutors, law enforcement, animal control officers, judges, veterinarians, animal shelter staff and the public. She drafts laws to protect animals, educates those whose job it is to protect animals and unites those from all facets of animal advocacy to work together to stop animal abuse. Every day, she assists in animal related cases. Some cases even involve being "boots on the ground" in rescuing animals from multi-animal impounds (puppy mills/animal hoarding).

Wanting to make resources accessible, Claudine created ALS, a division of TAPS, which provides free online resources on relevant state laws, rules and best practices. TAPS provides a resource website, webinars, individual assistance on cases, live targeted training, community education events and the APCE Expo (in its 22nd year and in 2019 boasted over 600 attendees from across the country). She has built a team of teachers and experts who continue to be the game-changers leading the fight to protect animals and end animal cruelty.

In the last three decades, Ms. Wilkins has shaped the way our justice system responds to animal cases. Through her work, better laws are on the books, accessible education is online and thousands of animals have been rescued from neglect and abuse.

Background

Claudine graduated with a J.D. in 1996 and later received her Master of Environmental Law and Policy. In 1997, she began as a prosecutor in Georgia at a time when animal cruelty cases were not given credence. Witnessing animal cruelty cases consistently "falling through the cracks", she began to take on and successfully prosecute these "animal cases".

Soon after, she discovered the dire need for training and networking for professionals involved animal cases and, in 1998, created the annual APCE. Her audience includes judges, prosecutors, law enforcement, animal control officers, veterinarians, vet techs, animal behaviorist, victims' advocates, animal shelters, rescues (who may hold evidentiary animals), animal advocates, in-the-field students, civil attorneys, elected officials and lawmakers. All professionals receive required continuing education hours.

"My mission is to inspire the next generation to become animal protectors, build the bond between animals and humans and provide education for professionals, advocates and the public on state and local animal protection laws."

~ Claudine Wilkins



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Animal Law Source

Leadership & Membership

State Bar of Georgia, 1996
State Bar of Georgia Animal Law Section,
Past Chair & Vice Chair American Bar Association

Speaking Venues

- American, Georgia, Florida, Washington, and
- Alabama Bar Associations
- Institute of Continuing Legal Ed. of GA
- GA Public Safety Training Center
- University of Georgia Vet School
- Children's Health Care of Atlanta
- Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council
- Georgia Veterinarian Medical Assoc.
- SafeKids Organization, Emergency Management Technicians Training
- National, Georgia & Florida Animal Control Association
- International Animal Law Summit
- Victoria Stilwell's Positively Dog Bite Prevention Conference
- Non-Profits Organizations and Professional Schools
- Community Events, Schools, Radio, Publications and Events
- GPSTC

Education

- Master's of Environmental Law and Policy, Vermont Law School, 1997
- Juris Doctor, JMLS 1996
- Bachelor's of Business Administration, International Marketing, GSU, 1994

Speaking Engagements

- Animal Cruelty, Neglect, Fighting, Hoarding, Puppy Mills, Abandonment, Equine, and More
- The "Link Between Animal & Human Crimes
- Animal Cases - Investigations, Enforcement & Inside the Courtroom
- Case preparation and the Top 10 Things You Need to Know About Successful Prosecution
- Dangerous Dog Law, Criminal & Civil, Liability & Prevention Laws, Legislation and Cases related to Animals
- Service & Emotional Support Animals and American Disability Act,
- Roles in animal Cases and Liabilities for Judges, Prosecutors, Law Enforcement, Animal Control, Veterinarians, Tech, Shelter/Rescue, Animal Behaviorist, Subject Matters Experts, etc.
- Animals as Evidence - the Burden, the Cost and Best Results
- Emergency Management - What to do with Animals When There is a Crisis
- K9 Handlers Laws and Liability
- Animal Shelter & Rescue/Foster - Laws and Liability (Success for Shelters & Rescues)
- Creating an Animal Cruelty Task Force - State and Local

In 2009, Claudine petitioned the State Bar of Georgia to create the "mainstream" Animal Law Section and served as Chair and Vice Chair. This Animal Law Section assists attorneys who are seeking developments in case law, proposed legislative changes, and other relevant issues in animal law. It also provides a forum for members to consider and discuss issues in animal law.

In 1996 Claudine succeeded in making information available to professionals and the public by creating "toolkits". Thousands of these toolkits, available online, provide summaries in animal law, state specific law, protocols, animal cruelty topics, cases, facts, and trends.

Work

Claudine provides targeted training throughout Georgia and has developed state-law-specific courses in various fields including; animal cruelty; animal fighting; multi-animal impound (i.e. puppy mills/animal hoarding); equine cruelty; service and emotional support animals, dangerous dogs and dog bite investigations; K9 handler's intensives; building animal cruelty task forces; and the "link" between animal cruelty and other crimes involving gangs, drugs, domestic violence, child neglect, organized crime; human trafficking; sex crimes against children.

She assisted in several GA judicial circuits to implement and Animal Cruelty Task force or to have dedicated animal cruelty prosecutors and law enforcement officers. She provides direction on diversion programs to reduce recidivism for first time offenders which includes vital education on pet ownership responsibility

Since 2014, she has been a frequent presenter at the International Animal Law Summit and hosted the "Summit" in 2018 at the Georgia State Bar.

Recognized for her work, she received numerous awards including the 2004 Animal Champion Award and continued efforts by drafting legislation protecting animals in GA and local laws including:

- Figo's Law 2023 - Human Harming a K9, search/rescue dog, etc.
- Amending Georgia state Animal Cruelty Law in 2014
- Responsible Dog Owner Law, aka Dangerous Dog Law in 2012
- Spay & Neuter License Plate in 2016
- Dog Fighting Law in 2006
- Cost of Animal Care Bond Law in 2016
- Microchip Law
- Law Enforcement Animal Law (Tanja's Law)
- Various Animal Ordinances.

During legislative sessions, she testifies at the Capital providing expertise in support of better laws. In 2019, she was asked to join the GA Senate committee to review service and emotional support animal laws. As a result, she along with another attorneys, created an educational information guide on the subject.

Knowing law enforcement officers (LEOs) are the key to protecting animals, Claudine approached the source, GA Public Safety Training Center, which trains "all" GA LEOs for their initial bootcamp and continuing education courses and in 2020, Claudine organized the first animal cruelty enforcement conference designed for GPSTC.

As a member of a Citizen Advisory Group to the Georgia Department of Agriculture Animal Protection Division, she recommends improvements on rules, legislation and partners in training opportunities.