

The Honorable Larry "Bart" Stanley, Jr.

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Dear Judge Stanley, Ms. Lisa Zavogiannis, and Government Officials of Warren County, McMinnville, and the State of Tennessee:

I am concerned about the case of Christopher Barnett, a McMinnville, TN man who claims his rights as an "owner" justify the February 16, 2008 mutilation of his Alaskan husky, Lucas. Barnett's violent actions rank as felony aggravated animal cruelty.

Witnesses saw Barnett beat Lucas and then chisel off the dog's teeth until root and nerve were exposed on at least 16 uppers and 14 lowers. The year and a half old dog's head "jerked back and forth," one witness said, as Barnett ran a saw-like tool through the dog's mouth.

I urge officials to levy the maximum felony penalty of two years in prison plus a \$3,000 fine. Please ensure Barnett undergoes psychological counseling and is barred from possessing or living with animals. Lucas and Honey, a Boxer also under Barnett's care, cannot be returned to this unremorseful abuser.

In addition to grinding Lucas' teeth down to the gum line, Barnett also bludgeoned the dog so severely he fractured a bone in the eye area. He is a repeat offender, charged in 2004 with deliberately killing an animal in Giles County. Though never convicted of this offense, his recurring behavior ought to be a red flag for those who determine his punishment.

Criminologists view the intensity of vicious behavior — regardless of the victim's identity — as a precursor to future violence. "People begin to fantasize about these violent actions... The next phase is usually acting out against animals," says Alan Brantley of the FBI's Investigative Support Unit.

Prolific murderers such as the Boston Strangler, Son of Sam, Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy practiced on animals before graduating to humans. Dennis Rader, notorious for the Bind-Torture-Kill murders in Wichita, Kansas, confessed to strangling cats and dogs prior to his sadistic spree. Indeed, men prosecuted for animal cruelty are five times as likely to be arrested for other violent crimes, according to Utah State University professor Frank Ascione's extensive research.

Animal torture is a serious crime that warrants your utmost deliberation. Christopher Barnett requires extensive rehabilitation and incarceration. Please do not release Lucas or Honey into his custody.

Thank you,