We are saddened to report the passing of Janice Sparhawk Gardner. She was a dedicated dog owner/breeder/exhibitor/delegate and judge and a tremendous advocate for responsible dog ownership and the rights of responsible dog owners in her home state of New Hampshire.

“Jan” Gardner served for many years as President, Legislative Liaison, and Delegate for the Rockingham County Kennel Club. In 2012, she was elected to the New Hampshire General Court as Representative of the citizens of Dover, New Hampshire Ward 3, Strafford District 15.

During her two terms in the New Hampshire legislature, she focused on animal issues and served on the House Environment & Agriculture (E&A) Committee, which hears all animal bills for the House of Representatives. She was appointed chair of the E&A subcommittee that focuses on animal ownership, care, abuse or neglect, breeding, sales, and other animal issues.

In 2014, Jan Gardner received the AKC’s James S. Holt Memorial Award for Promotion of Responsible Dog Ownership in Legislation (the AKC Legislator of the Year Award). She was also a popular speaker at two of AKC’s legislative conferences - most recently at the AKC 2017 New England Legislative Conference, where she shared her deep experience and perspectives on animal advocacy. Her dry wit and no-holds-barred delivery entertained, but left no one in doubt of her zeal to fight both animal extremism and dangerous apathy among her fellow dog fanciers.

Jan grew up with English Setters, and purchased her first Dachshund in the mid-1950s after researching a number of breeds. She competed in conformation and occasionally obedience from the mid-1960s through 1991. During those years, she titled about 48 home-bred Dachshunds (Standard Smooths and Miniature Wires), plus two Scottish Deerhounds. Her activities in dog clubs and events also included holding office and chairing approximately 50 shows and B and OB matches.

In 1970, Jan formed the Dog Owners of the Granite State (DOGS) and ran this group as president and Legislative Liaison until 1993. Under her leadership, DOGS overhauled New Hampshire statutes that touched on animal ownership, breeding and use. DOGS encompassed all state groups involved with dogs, including government agents, pet owners, hunters, veterinarians, breeders, and trainers among many others.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Jan wrote a monthly AKC Gazette column on legislative issues. In 1990, the AKC hired Jan to author The AKC Legislative Action Manual, which was awarded “Best Book” by the American Dog Writers Association. This book served as the basis of
seminars Jan performed throughout the East and Midwest, as well as for courses she taught at the University of New Hampshire.

Jan believed that dog owners MUST take an active role in protecting themselves, their lifestyles and their animals. She was known to comment, “We have the skills. We have the opportunity. We have the need. No one else can do this for us.”

Jan Gardner was an icon among legislative liaisons and animal welfare/responsible dog ownership advocates and the purebred dog community. She will be missed immensely.