

Members of Congress get a chance to pet puppies and kittens as part of "Paws for Love" program on Capitol Hill

It's not every day when members of Congress step away from running the country to get covered in animal hair. But this Valentine's Day they were filing in by the dozens to cuddle with adoptable dogs and cats.

Pups and politicians packed a room in the Cannon House Office Building for the "Paws for Love" Valentine's Day pet adoption event on Capitol Hill. The program tries to get politicians to adopt the pets and raise awareness about homeless animals.

Around 50 pets were brought to the event.

"People are rushing in from top secret meetings and then running out to go prepare for a vote," said Nancy Perry, Senior Vice President of Government Relations for the ASPCA, which hosted the event. "It's one of the few events where we bring together voices from the left and the right and everyone is smiling."

Congressman Michael Grimm (R- NY) snuck out of a meeting to get to the event and he brought a special guest with him – his own rescue dog, 2-year-old Sebastian.

"Dogs and cats bring so much fun and love," says Grimm. "And it's Valentine's Day! What better time? For the guys listening to this, you buy your girl a puppy – you are in!"

Rep Dennis Ross (R- FL), Lois Capps (D-CA) and Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-CA) were busy posing in front of the social media photo kiosk – taking pictures with adoptable pets then tweeting and facebooking away.

None

Others in attendance were Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA), **Rep. John Campbell (R-CA)**, Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL), Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Rep Mike Quigley (D-IL).

Brian George stood in the middle of the room holding Cy, a 2-year-old pit bull, upside down. No animal cruelty here – Cy seemed completely fine with it, panting at the attention.

George works at Barcs Animal Rescue in Baltimore, and Cy is one of two dogs the group brought to the event.

"We get dogs every day of the year. They just keep coming in," says George. "We take any kind of dogs but 98% are Pittbulls."

Lots of people have been by to see Cy, "some very important looking people," George notes. "I just hope one will want to take him home."

A few lucky animals had people reaching for applications. Jessie Pickard, adoption coordinator for GREAT Golden Retriever Rescue, said their table was almost out of forms.
None

Homeward Trails, a rescue group based in Arlington, Va., had a few special guests among the cats and dogs they brought to the event.

Madeleine Hsu and Caroline Previdi are two cats named after victims of the Newtown elementary school massacre. They are both members of the Little Rascals Doggie Day Care 26 Acts of Kindness program. Little Rascals is sponsoring free boarding for 26 animals, all named after the victims.

"So many of those little children loved animals," says Homeward Trails worker Lisa Walthers, tearing up. "This way we remember the victims and in their honor, animals live who would not have had a chance because of a lack of foster space."

Across the room, Courtney Hamilton, 27, held a sleepy two-month-old puppy named Betty Boop – at least temporarily – in her arms.

"Just look at her face," Hamilton says. "When I decided to come to the event I had an idea that I would be going home with a special somebody. I am ready to go out and buy her a dog bed already."

Hamilton will hear tomorrow if she gets to take the puppy home, and she – like many adoption hopefuls – isn't expecting to get any sleep tonight.