
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 309

AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL COSTS FOR THE CARE OF CONFISCATED ANIMALS AND ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE ON THE HUMANE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS IN MUNICIPAL SHELTERS.

SUMMARY:

By law, a court may vest temporary ownership of neglected or cruelly treated animals in a person or state, municipal, or other agency. When it does this, the animal's owner generally must either (1) give up ownership of the animal or (2) post a surety or cash bond with the agency or person in whom the court vested the animal's temporary care and custody. This bill increases the bond amount from \$500 total to \$500 per animal.

The bill expands the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) commissioner's use of the animal abuse cost recovery and animal population control accounts (see BACKGROUND). It requires him to use these accounts to reimburse a person or municipal or other public or private agency for the cost of providing temporary care to animals that lasts more than 30 days and exceeds the posted bond amount.

The bill also establishes an eight-member task force to study the humane treatment of animals in municipal shelters. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Environment and Planning and Development committees by January 1, 2015.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

TASK FORCE

Areas Task Force Must Consider

The bill requires the task force to consider:

1. establishing standards for the humane treatment of animals;

2. education for animal control officers (ACOs) on current license laws;
3. rules, regulations, and penalties for abuse;
4. developing a system to track people who have been convicted of animal abuse to prevent them from acquiring animals from shelters in other municipalities or states;
5. establishing standards for rescue organizations when evaluating foster homes;
6. establishing rules and responsibilities for volunteer groups that work with municipal shelters and ACOs; and
7. creating a framework to coordinate the efforts of local humane organizations with volunteer groups, foster groups, and municipal shelters.

Membership

Under the bill, the task force consists of eight members the top six legislative leaders appoint. The Senate President pro tempore and House Speaker each appoint two members and the Senate and House majority and minority leaders each appoint one member. Legislators may be appointed members. Appointments must be made within 30 days after the bill's passage, and the appointing authority fills any vacancy.

Chairpersons and Meetings

The bill requires the Senate President and House Speaker to select the task force's chairpersons from among the task force members. The chairpersons must schedule and hold the first task force meeting within 60 days after the bill's passage.

Staff

The bill requires the Planning and Development Committee's administrative staff to serve as the task force's staff.

Report and Termination

The bill requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Environment and Planning and Development committees by January 1, 2015. The task force terminates when it submits its report or on that date, whichever is later.

BACKGROUND

Animal Abuse Recovery Account

By law, the commissioner uses the animal abuse recovery account to cover the cost of housing and caring for animals DoAg seizes. The account is made up of (1) money DoAg collects from sales of seized animals at public auctions and (2) public or private donations.

Animal Population Control Account

By law, the commissioner uses the animal population control account to (1) implement, promote, and administer the animal population control program and (2) reimburse people completing animal control officer training. The account is made up of money collected from municipal pound adoption fees and license surcharges on unspayed or unneutered dogs.

Legislative History

The Senate referred the bill (File 279) to the Planning and Development Committee, which reported a substitute bill that added the task force requirements.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 28 Nay 0 (03/17/2014)

Planning and Development Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 0 (04/15/2014)