

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 14-205—sSB 309

Environment Committee

Planning and Development Committee

**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 act increases the bond amount from \$500 total to \$500 per animal.

The act expands the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) commissioner's use of the animal abuse cost recovery and animal population control accounts (see BACKGROUND). It allows him to use these accounts to reimburse a municipality for the cost of providing temporary care to animals that lasts more than 30 days and exceeds the posted bond amount. It limits total annual reimbursements to municipalities from the (1) animal abuse cost recovery account to \$25,000 and (2) animal population control account to \$50,000.

The act also establishes a nine-member task force to study (1) the humane treatment of animals in municipal and regional shelters and (2) other matters concerning such 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

Task Force Responsibilities

The act requires the task force to consider:

1. recommendations to establish standards for the humane treatment of animals in municipal and regional shelters;
2. existing education and training standards for animal control officers (ACOs) on current license laws;
3. rules, regulations, and penalties for abuse;
4. developing a system to prevent people convicted of animal abuse from acquiring animals from shelters in other municipalities or states;
5. establishing standards for shelters when evaluating potential animal adopters;

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6. establishing rules and responsibilities for volunteer groups that work with shelters and ACOs; and
7. creating a framework to coordinate the efforts of local humane organizations with volunteer groups, foster groups, and municipal and regional shelters.

Membership

Under the act, the task force consists of (1) the DoAg commissioner or his designee and (2) eight members the six legislative leaders appoint, as Table 1 shows. Legislators may serve as members. Appointments must be made within 30 days after the act's passage, and the appointing authority fills any vacancy.

Table 1: Task Force Appointees

Appointing Authority	Number	Qualifications
Senate president pro tempore	2	One ACO One Judicial Branch representative
House speaker	2	One member of a local animal welfare advocacy organization One sworn municipal police officer
Senate majority leader	1	A licensed veterinarian
Senate minority leader	1	A chief elected official from a town with 25,000 or fewer people
House majority leader	1	A chief elected official from a town with more than 25,000 people
House minority leader	1	A volunteer who works with municipal shelters and ACOs

Chairpersons and Meetings

The act requires the Senate president pro tempore and House speaker to select the task force's chairpersons from among its members. The chairpersons must schedule and hold the first task force meeting within 60 days after the act's passage.

Staff

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The Planning and Development Committee's administrative staff serves as the task force's staff.

Report and Termination

The act 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 pay to house and care for animals DoAg seizes. The account contains (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 ACO training. The account includes money collected from municipal pound adoption fees and license surcharges on unspayed or unneutered dogs.

OLR Tracking: JLK:LH:PF:ro