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## OLR Bill Analysis

### SB 932

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING POLICE ANIMALS AND DOGS IN VOLUNTEER CANINE SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill makes several changes affecting animals that assist certain public safety organizations. Primarily, the bill:

1. modifies the criminal penalties for injuring or killing a peace officer's animal or a volunteer canine search and rescue team's dog and makes it a crime to harass a peace officer's animal,
2. allows emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to give emergency treatment to injured peace officers' animals and transport them by ambulance to veterinary facilities, and
3. creates a grant program to give body armor to dogs in law enforcement units.

The bill also makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the dog body armor grant program is effective July 1, 2023, and the criminal penalty changes are effective October 1, 2023.

#### **§ 1 — CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR INJURING, KILLING, OR HARASSING PUBLIC SAFETY ANIMALS**

The bill increases the criminal penalty for intentionally injuring a peace officer's animal or a volunteer canine search and rescue team's dog while the animal is on duty and under supervision. Specifically, the bill raises the penalty from a class D felony to a class C felony, which increases the (1) maximum prison term from five to 10 years and (2) maximum fine from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The bill also formally classifies the intentional killing of these animals as a class C felony. Under current law, this crime is an unclassified felony with the same maximum imprisonment and fine as a class C felony.

Additionally, the bill makes it a class D misdemeanor to intentionally annoy, tease, torment, or otherwise harass a peace officer's animal when it is confined in a motor vehicle while on duty and under supervision. A class D misdemeanor is punishable by up to 30 days in prison, a fine of up to \$250, or both.

**§§ 2 & 3 — EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PERSONNEL TREATING AND TRANSPORTING PEACE OFFICERS' ANIMALS**

Under the bill, the Department of Public Health (DPH) must adopt regulations by July 1, 2024, on the emergency treatment of peace officers' animals. Specifically, the regulations must cover the following:

1. training emergency services personnel in basic first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and life-saving interventions for the animals;
2. safe handling procedures for the animals;
3. identifying veterinary facilities that provide emergency treatment for them; and
4. decontaminating and sterilizing equipment and vehicles after transporting them.

Starting July 1, 2024, the bill authorizes EMS personnel to provide emergency treatment to a peace officer's animal that is injured while it is on duty and under an officer's supervision. It also allows EMS personnel to transport the injured animal by ambulance to a veterinary facility equipped to provide it with emergency treatment consistent with the DPH regulations. However, the bill prohibits the EMS personnel from treating or transporting the animal if it would inhibit their ability to provide emergency medical attention or transport to a person requiring their services.

The bill specifies that an EMS personnel's treatment of a peace officer's animal is not deemed to be the practice of veterinary medicine. (Under existing law, practicing veterinary medicine requires licensure.)

#### **§ 4 — DOG BODY ARMOR GRANT PROGRAM**

The bill requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to administer, within available appropriations, a grant program to provide body armor for dogs in law enforcement units. The department may determine the application process and forms for the program, but the bill limits grant eligibility to units that use dogs to do law enforcement duties as part of a statewide or municipal canine unit. By October 1, 2023, the department must post, in a conspicuous place on its website, a description of the grant program that includes the eligibility criteria and application process. Grants must be made starting in FY 24 and annually afterwards.

#### **BACKGROUND**

##### ***Definitions***

By law, the following people are designated "peace officers": state and local police, Division of Criminal Justice inspectors, state marshals exercising statutory powers, judicial marshals performing their duties, conservation or special conservation officers, constables who perform criminal law enforcement duties, appointed special policemen, adult probation officers, Department of Correction officials authorized to make arrests in a correctional institution or facility, investigators in the State Treasurer's Office, motor vehicle inspectors in the Department of Motor Vehicles who have received Police Officer Standards and Training Council certification, U.S. marshals and deputy marshals, U.S. special agents authorized to enforce federal food and drug laws, and certified police officers of a law enforcement unit created and governed under a state-tribal memorandum (CGS § 53a-3(9)).

A "volunteer canine search and rescue team" is a person and a dog (1) appropriately trained and certified to do search and rescue operations by a nonprofit canine search and rescue organization that is a member of the National Association of Search and Rescue or its successor organization and (2) who jointly work at the request of a

police or fire department and provide services without compensation (CGS § 5-249(d)).

“Emergency medical services personnel” is a certified emergency medical responder, emergency medical technician, advanced emergency medical technician, emergency medical services instructor, or a licensed paramedic (CGS § 20-206jj(5)).

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 25 Nay 0 (03/16/2023)