

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5942

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Judiciary, February 27, 2001

Title: An act relating to dog guides and service animals.

Brief Description: Increasing penalties for crimes against dog guides and service animals.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Jacobsen and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Judiciary: 2/27/01 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5942 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Constantine, Vice Chair; Costa, Hargrove, Long and McCaslin.

Staff: Lidia Mori (786-7755)

Background: Current law provides that any person, firm, corporation, or agent of any person, firm, or corporation who denies or interferes with admittance to or enjoyment of public facilities or interferes with the rights of a totally or partially blind, hearing impaired, or otherwise physically disabled person is guilty of a misdemeanor. Supporters of this bill believe this sanction does not cover dog owners who allow their dogs to run loose and harass or interfere with a guide dog or a person using a guide dog.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A person who intentionally or negligently interferes or allows his or her pet to interfere with the use of a guide dog or service animal or jeopardize the safety of a guide dog user or the guide dog is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. It is also a gross misdemeanor to negligently injure or cause the death of a guide dog or service animal or to allow a pet to do so. A person who intentionally injures or causes the death of a guide dog or wrongfully exerts control over a guide dog with intent to deprive its user is guilty of a class B felony. A person convicted of this offense is required to make restitution for veterinary expenses and replacement costs of the guide dog.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The sanctions in local leash laws are not severe enough for situations where guide dogs are attacked or harassed by other dogs that are loose. A disabled person is put at grave risk when his or her service dog is hampered or impaired in any way. It is also a huge financial loss when a guide dog is injured or psychologically harmed to the extent that he or she is no longer able to perform.

Testimony Against: This is an important issue and needs more study and involvement of other groups like the National Federation for the Blind.

Testified: Senator McAuliffe; Hy Cohen (pro); Shelly Cohen (pro); Gary Burdette, Washington Council for the Blind (con); Michael Freeman, National Federation of the Blind (con); Mary Rook, Northwest Aide Dog Foundation (con); Barry Sheridan, Assistance Dog Club (pro).