

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5016

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Law & Justice, February 21, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to allowing animal control officers to carry firearms for personal protection.

**Brief Description:** Allowing animal control officers to carry firearms for personal protection.

**Sponsors:** Senators Van De Wege, Sheldon, Conway, Fortunato, Palumbo, Takko and Wagoner.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Law & Justice: 2/19/19, 2/21/19 [DP, w/oRec].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Permits animal control officers to carry firearms for their own personal protection.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pedersen, Chair; Dhingra, Vice Chair; Kuderer and Salomon.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Padden, Ranking Member; Holy and Wilson, L..

**Staff:** Melissa Burke-Cain (786-7755)

**Background:** Animal control programs address issues related to the pet population, health and safety, protection of animals and animal nuisances. An animal control officer (ACO) works for an animal control authority as an employee, contractor, or by appointment. ACOs aid in enforcement of animal control laws including laws related to animal cruelty crimes. ACOs typically enforce animal licensing laws and ordinances. State laws and local ordinances authorize ACOs to seize or impound animals in certain circumstances and issue complaints to law enforcement when there is probable cause to believe animal cruelty crimes have been committed.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

An animal control authority is an entity acting alone or in conjunction with other local government units to enforce the animal control laws of a city, county, and state and the shelter and welfare of animals. Animal control authorities may deal with animal quarantine, persons harboring wild, vicious, or dangerous animals, animals or livestock in unsafe or unhygienic environments, and cruelty to stock in transit.

The Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission conducts an animal control training academy in collaboration with the Washington Animal Control Association. The academy provides 80 hours of training for professional ACOs. Among the topics included in the training are conflict resolution, basic investigations, self-defense, officer safety, state and local laws, capture and restraint, and animal disease and prevention. Current law authorizes an animal control officer to carry non-firearm protective devices for personal protection.

**Summary of Bill:** An animal control officer is authorized to carry a firearm for their personal protection when enforcing the powers granted to them under the animal cruelty law.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This is a constituent-driven bill from Grays Harbor. The local requirement for animal control officers prohibits ACOs from carrying a firearm for personal protection. An animal control officer should be able to carry a firearm for personal protection as a matter of their personal safety. There have been some concerns raised about noncommissioned law enforcement officers carrying firearms. I will leave that issue to the committee.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Kevin Van De Wege, Prime Sponsor.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.