

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1201

As Reported by House Committee On:

Technology, Economic Development, & Veterans

Title: An act relating to identifying accommodations allowing pets in an emergency or extreme weather event.

Brief Description: Identifying accommodations allowing pets in an emergency or extreme weather event.

Sponsors: Representatives Leavitt, Ryu, Macri, Bronoske, Simmons and Berg.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Technology, Economic Development, & Veterans: 1/21/25, 1/29/25 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires a political subdivision to identify coshelters, emergency shelters, cooling centers, and heating centers that can accommodate companion animals in each update to its local comprehensive emergency management plans.
- Requires a political subdivision to provide companion animal emergency preparedness information on its website.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & VETERANS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Kloba, Vice Chair; Barnard, Ranking Minority Member; Cortes, Donaghy, Keaton, Paul, Penner, Shavers, Simmons, Thomas and Waters.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Volz.

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

Staff: Martha Wehling (786-7067).

Background:

Each political subdivision is required to either establish or join a local organization for emergency management. Each local or joint local organization for emergency management is required to submit a local comprehensive emergency management plan to the Washington Military Department Emergency Management Division. The local plans are coordinated with the state's comprehensive emergency management plan, and are required to be reviewed pursuant to the schedule created by the Adjutant General. The state's comprehensive emergency management plan was most recently revised on August 28, 2024, and recommends review and revision at least every two years.

A local comprehensive emergency management plan is required to include a communication plan to provide life safety information during an emergency. Each local or joint local organization for emergency management is encouraged to consult with affected community organizations.

Rules promulgated by the Military Department specify the local comprehensive emergency plan elements, periodic review and updating, testing of operational capabilities, and a limited English proficiency communication plan. Local emergency management organizations may collaborate with other entities with a mutual aid or interlocal agreement.

In 2006 the federal Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act was enacted. It requires state and local planners to plan for the mass care of household pets and service animals during mass sheltering and evacuation operations, including providing veterinary care.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

When a political subdivision updates its local comprehensive emergency management plan, it is required to identify a coshelter, emergency shelter, cooling center, and heating center that can accommodate companion animals within its jurisdiction. The political subdivision must only identify the shelters or centers to the extent practicable.

The emergency shelter identified by a political subdivision to accommodate companion animals is required to have safety procedures for companion animal sheltering, and comply with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) published disaster assistance policies and procedures.

A political subdivision is required to provide companion animal emergency preparedness information on its website. The information should include whether each identified emergency shelter, cooling center, or heating center can accommodate companion animals;

information to create a companion animal evacuation plan and emergency checklist, consistent with FEMA recommendations; and identification of local organizations that provide emergency companion animal assistance.

A "cooling center" is a facility that mitigates the public health impacts of extreme heat. A "coshelter" is a temporary public shelter that allows an individual to bring a companion animal to the shelter. An "emergency shelter" is a temporary location that provides basic shelter for individuals affected by an emergency or disaster. A "companion animal" is a domesticated animal commonly kept in the home for pleasure, rather than commercial, purposes. A "warming center" is a facility that mitigates the public health impacts of extreme cold.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill requires a political subdivision to identify a coshelter for emergencies or extreme weather events, to the extent practicable, in an update to a local comprehensive management plan, and defines coshelter. The substitute bill changes the term "pet" to "companion animal."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on January 29, 2025.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Many individuals will not come out of the elements or go to a shelter if there is no option for their pets, which can result in life-or-death decisions. Pet ownership is the highest risk factor for non-evacuation compliance in an emergency or disaster, and Washington geography means residents may grapple with floods, earthquakes, wildfires, heat domes, and extreme cold. Many owners put their pet's needs before their own, and will choose to remain unsheltered rather than give up their companion. Eighty percent of people who illegally return to an evacuated area in order to rescue a pet, and while 99 percent of pet owners plan to bring their pet with them, 84 percent do not have emergency housing secured, and only 46 percent have a disaster plan. Pierce and Snohomish County have already integrated cosheltering into their emergency plans, and many counties and cities have dedicated web pages with information.

Counties and cities publish the location of warming centers during extreme cold, cooling centers during extreme heat, and facility locations when air quality is poor. Proactive planning, such as that done by Kittitas County for large animals, helped volunteers provide

the assistance needed after the Taylor Bridge fire in 2012. However, there is a lot of variation across the state; some locations provide zero accommodations for pets, others offer it widely. Whenever it is possible to designate shelters for pets, counties and cities can enhance public safety and emergency preparedness. No Washingtonian should be forced to make the difficult decision between choosing safety or staying with their pet.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Mari Leavitt, prime sponsor; Brittany Benesi, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; Cat Kelly, Animal Legal Defense Fund; Amy McGuffin, Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce; and Rachele Raj, Seattle Veterinary Outreach.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.