

HB 1428 -- SERVICE DOGS

SPONSOR: Sommer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on General Laws by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill revises the term "service dog" to include a psychiatric service dog or mental health service dog that is trained to do work or perform tasks for an owner with a psychiatric disability, medical condition, or developmental disability recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Currently, any individual who knowingly or intentionally fails to maintain control of his or her animal to prevent it from chasing or harassing a working service dog and temporarily interferes with the service dog's ability to carry out its function is guilty of a class B misdemeanor. The bill requires the owner of an animal that causes substantial physical injury or death to the service dog to be ordered to fully compensate the service dog's owner for the injury, loss, or replacement of the service dog.

This bill is similar to HB 787 (2015) and HB 1428 (2016).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill will help former servicemen and women who suffer from PTSD. Medications to treat PTSD can have physical side effects and often cause individuals suffering with PTSD to feel numb or detached from the events going on around them. Service dogs, on the other hand, help men and women suffering from PTSD while allowing them to engage with their families and participate in the world around them. Service dogs provide a sense of security and are trained to help their owners cope with the effects of their disability or medical condition. These service dogs provide a valuable service not just to individuals suffering from psychiatric or developmental disabilities but also to their families and their communities.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Sommer; Shawn Lee; Susan Hinkle, Missouri Patriot Paws; Mark Heimkes; Jeremy Moore; Aleksandra Chirlin; National Association of Social Workers; Natasha Moore; Brenda Faulkner; Katie Knight; Carol Poland; Michael Poland; Missouri Federation Of Animal Owners; and Mitchell Iken.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.