

HB 1649 -- LAW ENFORCEMENT ANIMALS

SPONSOR: Cornejo

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 8 to 2. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules- Legislative Oversight Committee by a vote of 10 to 2.

Currently, assault on a law enforcement animal is a class C misdemeanor. This bill changes the penalty to a class A misdemeanor. If the assault on the law enforcement animal results in the death of the animal or disables the animal to the extent it is unable to be utilized as a law enforcement animal, the penalty is currently a class E felony. This bill changes the penalty to a class C felony.

Additionally, there are currently some specified circumstances exempted from various animal offenses. This bill excludes from the exemption the killing or injuring of a law enforcement animal.

This bill also exempts any dog that is owned, or the service of which is employed, by a law enforcement agency and that injures another animal or human in the course of their official duties from certain animal-related statutes.

This bill is the same as HB 423 (2017).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that law enforcement animals are crucial to law enforcement agencies' ability to properly serve, so the penalty for harming or killing a law enforcement animal should be increased.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Cornejo; United States Police Canine Association Region 16; and Jeff Weber, Cass County Sheriff's Office.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.