

By the Committee on Criminal Justice; and Senator Abruzzo

591-01282-16

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to care for retired law enforcement
3 dogs; creating s. 943.69, F.S.; providing a short
4 title; defining terms; providing legislative findings;
5 creating the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs
6 Program within the Department of Law Enforcement;
7 requiring the department to contract with a
8 corporation not for profit to administer and manage
9 the program; providing requirements for the
10 corporation not for profit; providing requirements for
11 the disbursement of funds for the veterinary care of
12 eligible retired law enforcement dogs; placing an
13 annual cap on the amount of funds available for the
14 care of an eligible retired law enforcement dog;
15 prohibiting a former handler or adopter from receiving
16 reimbursement if funds are depleted for the year for
17 which such reimbursement is sought; providing for
18 administrative fees; requiring the department to adopt
19 rules; providing an appropriation; providing an
20 effective date.

21
22 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

23
24 Section 1. Section 943.69, Florida Statutes, is created to
25 read:

26 943.69 Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.-

27 (1) SHORT TITLE.-This section may be cited as the "Care for
28 Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program Act."

29 (2) DEFINITIONS.-As used in this section, the term:

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30 (a) "Law enforcement agency" means a lawfully established
31 state or local public agency having primary responsibility for
32 the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of the
33 penal, traffic, highway, regulatory, game, immigration, postal,
34 customs, or controlled substance laws.

35 (b) "Retired law enforcement dog" means a dog that was
36 previously in the service of or employed by a law enforcement
37 agency in this state for the principal purpose of aiding in the
38 detection of criminal activity, enforcement of laws, or
39 apprehension of offenders and that received certification in
40 obedience and apprehension work from a certifying organization
41 such as the National Police Canine Association or other
42 certifying organization.

43 (c) "Veterinarian" has the same meaning as provided in s.
44 474.202.

45 (d) "Veterinary care" means the practice of veterinary
46 medicine as defined in s. 474.202 by a veterinarian. The term
47 includes annual wellness examinations, vaccines, internal and
48 external parasite prevention treatments, testing and treatment
49 of illnesses and diseases, medications, emergency care and
50 surgeries, specialty care such as veterinary oncology,
51 euthanasia, and cremation.

52 (3) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.—The Legislature finds that:

53 (a) Law enforcement dogs have become an integral part of
54 many law enforcement efforts statewide, including the
55 apprehension of suspects through tracking and searching,
56 evidence location, drug and bomb detection, and search and
57 rescue operations;

58 (b) Law enforcement agencies agree that the use of law

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59 enforcement dogs is an extremely cost-effective means of crime
60 control and that these dogs possess skills and abilities that
61 frequently exceed those of existing technology;

62 (c) The service of law enforcement dogs is often dangerous
63 and can expose them to injury at a rate higher than that of
64 nonservice dogs; and

65 (d) Law enforcement dogs provide significant contributions
66 to the residents of this state.

67 (4) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—The Care for Retired Law
68 Enforcement Dogs Program is created within the department to
69 provide a stable funding source for veterinary care provided to
70 these dogs.

71 (5) ADMINISTRATION.—The department shall contract with a
72 corporation not for profit organized under chapter 617 to
73 administer and manage the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs
74 Program. Notwithstanding chapter 287, the department shall
75 select a corporation not for profit through a competitive grant
76 award process which:

77 (a) Is dedicated to the protection or care of retired law
78 enforcement dogs;

79 (b) Is exempt from taxation under s. 501(a) of the Internal
80 Revenue Code as an organization described in s. 501(c)(3) of
81 that code;

82 (c) Has maintained such tax-exempt status for at least 5
83 years;

84 (d) Agrees to be subject to review and audit at the
85 discretion of the Auditor General in order to ensure accurate
86 accounting and disbursement of state funds; and

87 (e) Demonstrates the ability to effectively and efficiently

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88 disseminate information and to assist former handlers and
89 adopters of retired law enforcement dogs in complying with this
90 section.

91 (6) FUNDING.—

92 (a) The corporation not for profit shall be the disbursing
93 authority for funds appropriated by the Legislature to the
94 department for the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs
95 Program. These funds shall be disbursed to the former handler or
96 adopter of a retired law enforcement dog upon receipt of:

97 1. Valid documentation from the law enforcement agency from
98 which the dog retired which verifies that the dog was in the
99 service of or employed by such agency; and

100 2. A valid invoice from a veterinarian for veterinary care
101 provided in this state to a retired law enforcement dog and
102 documentation establishing payment of the invoice by the former
103 handler or adopter of a retired law enforcement dog.

104 (b) Annual disbursements to a former handler or adopter to
105 reimburse him or her for the cost of veterinary care provided to
106 a retired law enforcement dog may not exceed \$1,500 per dog. A
107 former handler or adopter of a retired law enforcement dog may
108 not accumulate unused funds from a current year for use in a
109 future year.

110 (c) A former handler or adopter of a retired law
111 enforcement dog who seeks reimbursement for veterinary care may
112 not receive reimbursement if funds appropriated for the Care for
113 Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program are depleted in the year
114 for which the reimbursement is sought.

115 (7) ADMINISTRATIVE FEES.—The corporation not for profit
116 must receive administrative fees, including salaries and

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117 benefits, of up to 10 percent of appropriated funds.

118 (8) RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.-The department shall adopt rules
119 pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement this section.

120 Section 2. For the 2016-2017 fiscal year, and each fiscal
121 year thereafter, the sum of \$300,000 in recurring funds is
122 appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of
123 Law Enforcement for the purpose of implementing the Care for
124 Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.

125 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016.