

CHAPTER 2022-188

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 226

An act relating to care for retired police dogs; providing a short title; creating s. 943.69, F.S.; providing legislative findings; defining terms; creating the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program within the Department of Law Enforcement; requiring the department to contract with a nonprofit corporation to administer and manage the program; specifying requirements for the nonprofit corporation; specifying requirements for the disbursement of funds for the veterinary care of eligible retired police dogs; limiting annual funding available for an eligible dog; prohibiting the accumulation of unused funds from a current year for use in a future year; prohibiting reimbursement in certain circumstances; providing for use of appropriated funds for administrative expenses; requiring the department to adopt rules; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. This act may be cited as the “Care for Retired Police Dogs Program Act.”

Section 2. Section 943.69, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

943.69 Care for Retired Police Dogs Program.—

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS.—The Legislature finds that:

(a) Police dogs are an integral part of many law enforcement and correctional efforts statewide, including the apprehension of suspects through tracking and searching, evidence location, drug and bomb detection, and search and rescue operations.

(b) Law enforcement and correctional agencies agree that the use of police dogs is an extremely cost-effective means of crime control and that police dogs possess skills and abilities that frequently exceed those of existing technology.

(c) The service of police dogs is often dangerous and can expose them to injury at a rate higher than that of nonservice dogs.

(d) Police dogs provide significant contributions to the residents of this state.

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

(a) “Correctional agency” means a lawfully established state or local public agency having primary responsibility for the supervision, protection,

care, custody, control, or investigation of inmates at a correctional institution.

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

(c) “Retired police dog” means a dog that was previously in the service of or employed by a law enforcement agency or a correctional agency in this state for the principal purpose of aiding in the detection of criminal activity, enforcement of laws, or apprehension of offenders and that received certification in obedience and apprehension work from a certifying organization, such as the National Police Canine Association, Inc., or other certifying organization.

(d) “Veterinarian” has the same meaning as in s. 474.202.

(e) “Veterinary care” means the practice, by a veterinarian, of veterinary medicine as defined in s. 474.202. The term includes annual wellness examinations, vaccinations, internal and external parasite prevention treatments, testing and treatment of illnesses and diseases, medications, emergency care and surgeries, veterinary oncology or other specialty care, euthanasia, and cremation.

(3) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—The Care for Retired Police Dogs Program is created within the department to provide a stable funding source for the veterinary care for retired police dogs.

(4) ADMINISTRATION.—The department shall contract with a non-profit corporation organized under chapter 617 to administer and manage the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program. Notwithstanding chapter 287, the department shall select the nonprofit corporation through a competitive grant award process. The nonprofit corporation must meet all of the following criteria:

(a) Be dedicated to the protection or care of retired police dogs.

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

(c) Have maintained such tax-exempt status for at least 5 years.

(d) Agree to be subject to review and audit at the discretion of the Auditor General in order to ensure accurate accounting and disbursement of state funds.

(e) Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently disseminate information and to assist former handlers and adopters of retired police dogs in complying with this section.

(5) FUNDING.—

(a) The nonprofit corporation shall be the disbursing authority for funds the Legislature appropriates to the department for the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program. These funds must be disbursed to the former handler or the adopter of a retired police dog that served for 5 years or more as a police dog upon receipt of:

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

a. That the dog served 5 years or more with that agency;

b. Documentation showing that the dog served a total of 5 years or more with two or more law enforcement agencies or correctional agencies; or

c. That, notwithstanding the length of service requirements elsewhere in this paragraph, the dog served 3 years or more with one or more law enforcement agencies or correctional agencies, was injured in the line of duty while serving with a law enforcement agency or correctional agency, and retired from the agency the dog was serving with at the time of the injury due to such injury; and

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

(b) Annual disbursements to a former handler or an adopter to reimburse him or her for the cost of the retired police dog’s veterinary care may not exceed \$1,500 per dog. A former handler or an adopter of a retired police dog may not accumulate unused funds from a current year for use in a future year.

(c) A former handler or an adopter of a retired police dog who seeks reimbursement for veterinary care may not receive reimbursement if funds appropriated for the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program are depleted in the year for which the reimbursement is sought.

(6) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—The department shall pay to the nonprofit corporation, and the nonprofit corporation may use, up to 10 percent of appropriated funds for its administrative expenses, including salaries and benefits.

(7) RULEMAKING.—The department shall adopt rules to implement this section.

Section 3. For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, and each fiscal year thereafter, the sum of \$300,000 in recurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Law Enforcement for the purpose of implementing and administering the Care for Retired Police Dogs Program.

Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2022.

Approved by the Governor June 10, 2022.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 10, 2022.