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2013-2014 Regular Sessions

I N A S S E M B L Y

(PREFILED)

January 9, 2013

Introduced by M. of A. KELLNER, MILLER, MILLMAN, MOYA, ROSENTHAL, MAISEL, SCHIMEL -- Multi-Sponsored by -- M. of A. BARCLAY, CERETTO, HOOPER, KATZ, LENTOL, MARKEY, McDONOUGH, McLAUGHLIN, REILICH, TEDISCO, WEISENBERG -- read once and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations

AN ACT to amend the state law, in relation to designating rescue dogs as the official state dog

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1 Section 1. Legislative intent. Throughout history, art and literature
2 have depicted humans in all walks of life and social strata with dogs,
3 illustrating their widespread acceptance in everyday life. Some reli-
4 gions even incorporated them into their worship. Indeed, dogs have long
5 been admired for the purity of their character traits, with military
6 annals documenting the wartime bravery and courage of dogs in the K-9
7 Corps.
8 Closer to home, our own culture is populated with examples of the
9 well-established place dogs have found in our hearts and homes. People
10 of all ages, but particularly the elderly and the young, enjoy their
11 companionship. For single people, dogs offer a welcome relief from lone-
12 liness. For children, an animal in the home contributes warmth and
13 unconditional love, and teaches responsibility and consideration for the
14 needs of another creature. Those who suffer from disease or injury expe-
15 rience a therapeutic, even spiritual, benefit from their presence.
16 Dogs do so much good for the community: they give us a sense of opti-
17 mism, safeguard us from depression and loneliness, and break down the
18 barriers that isolate us from one another. Their presence improves our
19 health, protects us from danger, and teaches us about caring and respon-
20 sibility. And they ask for so little in return.

EXPLANATION--Matter in *ITALICS* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [] is old law to be omitted.

LBD01884-01-3

1 Sadly, as many as 4 million dogs enter animal shelters in the United
2 States each year. Over 90 percent of these dogs are savable. Most of
3 them are simply victims of circumstance, ending up in a shelter through
4 no fault of their own: a person moves, a couple divorces, a job is lost,
5 someone gets ill or dies. Most of the dogs are healthy, well-behaved,
6 and even housetrained.

7 Unfortunately, some people perceive rescue animals as "damaged,"
8 concerned that the reason they are in the shelter is because something
9 is wrong with them. Nothing could be further from the truth. But because
10 of that perception, some people choose not to adopt. Tragically, roughly
11 half of all dogs in shelters are killed.

12 The deaths of these innocent animals can be prevented through
13 adoption. Shelter and rescue animals are eager to become beloved members
14 of a family, unconditionally loving and loyal pets, grateful for a
15 second chance.

16 While some with special needs might need a little extra TLC, they can
17 become members of loving homes, as many of the dogs saved from the
18 horrific dog fighting operation in the Michael Vick case have proven.

19 Adopting an animal from a shelter or rescue group eases the burden on
20 the shelter or rescue group, enabling it to continue to serve the commu-
21 nity by taking in other unwanted or needy animals. Generally, dogs
22 adopted from shelters or rescue groups are neutered or spayed, thus
23 reducing the number of homeless dogs in the state.

24 There are many benefits to adopting an animal from a shelter, ranging
25 from the ownership support services that most shelters and rescues offer
26 to the ability to adopt a dog that is already trained and housetrained.
27 Many animal shelters and rescue organizations provide new owners with an
28 array of material concerning their new pet's personality, temperament,
29 habits and other general qualities, and relating to training, common
30 behavior problems, feeding, general care and more. In addition, there is
31 the satisfaction of knowing that through adoption, a life has been
32 saved.

33 As with the designation of other state symbols, such as the state
34 flower or state tree, designating the rescue dog as official state dog
35 will serve an important educational function. The state will promote
36 humane education, providing opportunities for children in particular to
37 learn about adopting rescued animals, as well as about the importance of
38 measures such as spaying and neutering pets, providing them with micro-
39 chip identification implants, and providing responsive pet care--all of
40 which have been proven to reduce the number of animals arriving in shel-
41 ters.

42 The legislature hereby finds and declares it necessary and in good
43 policy of the state to promote and encourage the adoption of animals
44 from animal shelters and animal rescue organizations and to recognize
45 the services these entities provide.

46 S 2. The state law is amended by adding a new section 84-a to read as
47 follows:

48 S 84-A. STATE DOG. THE RESCUE DOG SHALL BE THE OFFICIAL DOG OF THE
49 STATE OF NEW YORK. AS USED IN THIS SECTION "RESCUE DOG" MEANS A DOG OF
50 ANY BREED OR MIXTURE OF BREEDS RESCUED AND ADOPTED FROM AN ANIMAL SHEL-
51 TER OR RESCUE GROUP LOCATED IN THE STATE.

52 S 3. This act shall take effect immediately.