

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; providing legislative findings; providing
5 definitions; creating the Care for Retired Law
6 Enforcement Dogs Program within the Department of Law
7 Enforcement; requiring the department to contract with
8 a nonprofit corporation to administer and manage the
9 program; providing requirements for the nonprofit
10 corporation; providing requirements for the
11 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
16 accumulating unused funds from a current year for use
17 in a future year; prohibiting a former handler or
18 adopter from receiving reimbursement if funds are
19 depleted for the year for which the reimbursement is
20 sought; requiring the department to pay to the
21 nonprofit corporation, and authorizing the nonprofit
22 corporation to use, up to a certain percentage of
23 appropriated funds for administrative purposes;
24 requiring the department to adopt rules; providing an
25 appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

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

943.69 Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.—

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

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

(a) Law enforcement dogs are an integral part of many law enforcement 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 agencies agree that the use of law enforcement dogs is an extremely cost-effective means of crime control and that these dogs possess skills and abilities that frequently exceed those of existing technology.

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

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

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

(a) "Law enforcement agency" means a lawfully established state or local public agency having primary responsibility for

51 the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of
 52 penal, traffic, highway, regulatory, game, immigration, postal,
 53 customs, or controlled substance laws.

54 (b) "Retired law enforcement dog" means a dog that was
 55 previously in the service of or employed by a law enforcement
 56 agency in this state for the principal purpose of aiding in the
 57 detection of criminal activity, enforcement of laws, or
 58 apprehension of offenders and that received certification in
 59 obedience and apprehension work from a certifying organization,
 60 such as the National Police Canine Association, Inc., or other
 61 certifying organization.

62 (c) "Veterinarian" has the same meaning as provided in s.
 63 474.202.

64 (d) "Veterinary care" means the practice, by a
 65 veterinarian, of veterinary medicine as defined in s. 474.202.
 66 The term includes annual wellness examinations, vaccinations,
 67 internal and external parasite prevention treatments, testing
 68 and treatment of illnesses and diseases, medications, emergency
 69 care and surgeries, veterinary oncology or other specialty care,
 70 euthanasia, and cremation.

71 (4) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—The Care for Retired Law
 72 Enforcement Dogs Program is created within the department to
 73 provide a stable funding source for the veterinary care these
 74 dogs receive.

75 (5) ADMINISTRATION.—The department shall contract with a

76 nonprofit corporation organized under chapter 617 to administer
77 and manage the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.
78 Notwithstanding chapter 287, the department shall select the
79 nonprofit corporation through a competitive grant award process.
80 The nonprofit corporation must meet all of the following
81 criteria:

82 (a) Be dedicated to the protection or care of retired law
83 enforcement dogs.

84 (b) Be exempt from taxation under s. 501(a) of the
85 Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in s.
86 501(c) (3) of that code.

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

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

92 (e) Demonstrate the ability to effectively and efficiently
93 disseminate information and to assist former handlers and
94 adopters of retired law enforcement dogs in complying with this
95 section.

96 (6) FUNDING.—

97 (a) The nonprofit corporation shall be the disbursing
98 authority for funds the Legislature appropriates to the
99 department for the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs
100 Program. These funds must be disbursed to the former handler or

101 adopter of a retired law enforcement dog upon receipt of:

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

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

109 (b) Annual disbursements to a former handler or adopter to
110 reimburse him or her for the cost of the retired law enforcement
111 dog's veterinary care may not exceed \$1,500 per dog. A former
112 handler or adopter of a retired law enforcement dog may not
113 accumulate unused funds from a current year for use in a future
114 year.

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

120 (7) ADMINISTRATIVE FEES.—The department shall pay to the
121 nonprofit corporation, and the nonprofit corporation may use, up
122 to 10 percent of appropriated funds for its administrative
123 expenses, including salaries and benefits.

124 (8) FUNDING.—For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, and each
125 fiscal year thereafter, the sum of \$300,000 in recurring funds

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126 | is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department
127 | of Law Enforcement for the purpose of implementing and
128 | administering the Care for Retired Law Enforcement Dogs Program.

129 | (9) RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.—The department shall adopt rules
130 | to implement this section.

131 | Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.