

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 27

Designating the first full week in August, in 2016 and in each succeeding year, as International Assistance Dog Week in Virginia.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 10, 2016
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2016

WHEREAS, in 1929, the first guide dog training school in the United States, The Seeing Eye, was established in Nashville, Tennessee, by Dorothy Harrison Eustis and Morris Frank after Frank returned from Switzerland with a German Shepherd dog he named Buddy, whose training was based on that of European guide dogs for blind World War I veterans; and

WHEREAS, in 1939, Lions International established Leader Dogs for the Blind in Detroit, Michigan, and the group has continued to support the organization, as well as Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), through various programs such as Lions Project for Canine Companions for Independence; and

WHEREAS, in 1975, Dr. Bonita Bergin developed the concept of the service dog to assist people with mobility limitations and founded CCI, the first nonprofit organization to train and place service dogs; in 1977, the first hearing dog training school, Dogs for the Deaf, was established in the United States by Roy G. Kabat; and

WHEREAS, in 1977, the Delta Foundation, renamed the Delta Society in 1981 and now Pet Partners, was formed to better encompass an expanding group of interested researchers and medical practitioners whose cumulative findings indicated that the presence of companion animals helped reduce people's blood pressure, lower stress and anxiety levels, and stimulate the release of endorphins; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, the Delta Society's Dr. Bill McCulloch helped the American Veterinary Medical Association initiate the Human-Animal Bond Task Force, which continues to this day; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, members of hearing dog programs began meeting annually; these meetings evolved into Assistance Dogs International (ADI), which set benchmarks for ethics in 1992 and public access test requirements for assistance dogs in 1995 on which today's access standards are based; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, the nonprofit International Association of Assistance Dog Partners was launched at the joint Delta Society and ADI Conference as an independent cross-disability consumer organization that could represent all assistance dog organizations and advance consumer interests in the assistance dog field; and

WHEREAS, in the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, service dog training organizations have expanded their programs to support and accommodate the needs of veterans returning to the United States from Iraq and Afghanistan with multiple disabilities, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, assistance dogs transform the lives of their human partners with physical and mental disabilities by serving as devoted companions, helpers, aides, best friends, and close family members; assistance dogs may be service dogs, guide dogs, hearing alert dogs, seizure alert/response dogs, cardiac alert dogs, or medical alert dogs; and

WHEREAS, guide dogs assist people with vision loss by leading them around physical obstacles, to seating, and when crossing streets, entering and exiting doorways and elevators, and climbing stairways; and

WHEREAS, service dogs assist people with disabilities with walking, balancing, dressing, transferring from place to place, retrieving and carrying items, opening doors and drawers, pushing buttons, pulling wheelchairs, and carrying out household chores such as loading and unloading the washer and dryer; and

WHEREAS, hearing alert dogs alert people with a hearing loss to specific sounds such as doorbells or knocks at the door, ringing telephones, crying babies, sirens, another person's voice, buzzing timers or sensors, and smoke, fire, and clock alarms; and

WHEREAS, alert/response dogs alert or respond to medical conditions, such as heart attack, stroke, diabetes, epilepsy/seizure disorders, panic attack, anxiety attack, and PTSD; and

WHEREAS, the annual International Assistance Dog Week provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the many ways assistance dogs selflessly mitigate individuals' disability-related limitations; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth supports those partnered with service dogs, and many individuals and groups in Virginia have already joined forces with assistance dog partners, organizations, and concerned citizens throughout America to raise awareness of assistance dogs and observe International Assistance Dog Week; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate the first full week in August, in 2016 and in each succeeding year, as International Assistance Dog Week in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to International Assistance Dog Week so that members of the organization may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate post the designation of this week on the General Assembly's website.