

2016 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 160

Requesting the Virginia Department of Health to study Virginia's procedures for licensing dogs and cats. Report.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 11, 2016

Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2016

WHEREAS, the adoption of legal requirements in every state for vaccination of dogs and domesticated cats against rabies has resulted in dramatic declines in the incidence of rabies and human exposure to rabies since 1960; and

WHEREAS, Virginia law has required rabies inoculation of dogs since 1984 and domesticated cats since 1988; and

WHEREAS, under § 3.2-6524 of the Code of Virginia, it is unlawful for a person to own a dog that is four months old or older unless the owner has obtained a license and a locality is authorized to adopt an ordinance that requires the licensing of a cat four months old or older; and

WHEREAS, proof of a rabies vaccination is required to obtain a local license for a dog or cat; and

WHEREAS, in practice, the local licensing requirement provides the principal tool for enforcing the state requirement for vaccination of dogs against rabies; and

WHEREAS, over the past two decades, Virginia has substantially revised its comprehensive animal control laws; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, Virginia adopted a law that required veterinarians to provide a copy of rabies vaccination certificates for dogs to the city or county treasurer, as a means of increasing compliance with licensing requirements; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding these actions, the present system for licensing at the local level does not ensure a high level of vaccination compliance, is plagued by licensing noncompliance, and leaves animal control officers and other public safety officials without access to a statewide data resource regarding animals, thereby rendering animal control efforts more difficult and less effective; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Department of Health be requested to study Virginia's procedures for licensing dogs and cats.

In conducting its study, the Virginia Department of Health shall review Virginia's companion animal licensing procedures and assess the feasibility of establishing a statewide system for recording rabies vaccinations and licensing that may include a statewide database of licensed companion animals that can be remotely accessed by animal control officers in the field. The Department shall be assisted in its work by a panel of stakeholders chosen by the Commissioner of Health. The panel of stakeholders shall include representatives of local government, the Virginia Animal Control Association, and the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association and citizens experienced in animal welfare issues.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall provide technical assistance to the Virginia Department of Health for this study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Virginia Department of Health for this study, upon request.

The Virginia Department of Health shall complete its meetings by November 15, 2016, and report its findings and recommendations to the Chairman of the House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health by December 1, 2016, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2017 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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