

Sen. Cowles: Bill to save our pets in emergency situations becomes law

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Bill to Save Our Pets in Emergency Situations Becomes Law

MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after 2017 Senate Bill 435, authored by Senator Cowles and Representatives Considine (D-Baraboo) and Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) and named the Save Our Pets bill, was signed into law as 2017 Wisconsin Act 166:

“The physical trauma that someone avoids during a car accident, house fire or other emergency situation may be offset by the emotional trauma they suffer from injuries or even death to a beloved pet. While some first responders are already treating pets at emergency scenes, they put themselves at professional risk while providing care as their actions are illegal under state law. This bill will provide first responders with the legal authority they need to continue rendering aid to families throughout Wisconsin, regardless of whether the family member walks on two legs or four.”

Senator Cowles and Representatives Considine and Kitchens were joined at the bill signing by Officer Holly McManus and K9 Officer Bane of the St. Francis PD and

Deputy Brian Noll and K9 Officer Blackjack of the Marquette County Sheriff's Department. Prior to, under the state's Veterinarian Practice Act, only licensed veterinarians are authorized to provide care to animals. As a result, first responders must wait for an on-call veterinarian to treat injured pets at emergency scenes, and the vet's response time may be too great to save the life of an injured pet.

Senate Bill 435 provides the legal authority for first responders to provide emergency care to dogs, cats and other household pets. Under this bill, care could not be provided to pets until all humans are in stable condition at the scene or have been transported from the scene. SB 435 also provides immunity to first responders that either act in good faith while providing care to pets or decline to render aid to the animal.