



American Veterinary Medical Association Governmental Relations Division

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H.R. 1154/S. 769 Veterans Equal Treatment for Service Dogs Act

AVMA Position: Support

Summary:

Introduced by Congressman John Carter (TX-31st) and Senator Tom Harkin (IA), H.R. 1154/S. 769 would prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) from restricting the use of service dogs in or on any VA facility or property or any facility or property that receives VA funding.

Background:

- There have been reports of service dogs being denied access to VA facilities in the media.
- Currently seeing-eye dogs have full access to VA facilities, but service dogs used for other purposes may not.

Justification:

- Service animals are animals trained to assist people with disabilities in the activities of normal living. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines service animals as ".....any...animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals who are hearing impaired to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair or fetching dropped items."
- Since the introduction of this legislation the Department of Veterans Affairs has issued a directive that requires VA facilities to create new policies allowing veterans who utilize VA-sanctioned service dogs for physical disabilities the same access afforded to seeing-eye and guide dogs. However, this directive expires in March 2016, and is seen as a temporary fix, not a permanent solution.

Current Status:

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Health.

Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, legislative hearing held June 8, 2011.

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