

'Animals in Disaster' Bill Passes in Connecticut

New "Animals in Disaster" bill mandates that provisions be made for evacuating dogs during emergencies.

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The Connecticut state Senate has passed the Animals in Disaster bill, making it one of several states to include dogs, other pets, and service animals in disaster or emergency planning.

The Senate unanimously passed the legislation, formally known as H.B. 5186, with a 35 to 0 vote on April 25. On April 11, the House voted 131 to 11 in favor of the bill.

H.B. 5186 requires that local civil preparedness plans include provisions for evacuating dogs, other pets, and service animals during emergencies. The bill was sponsored by Representatives Kevin Witkos, Carlo Leone, Bruce Zalaski, John W. Hetherington, Diana S. Urban, Elissa T. Wright, Gail K. Hamm, and Patricia M. Widlitz.

The bill now goes to Gov. M. Jodi Rell for review.

In Connecticut, 56 percent of households have a pet, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association, and there are an estimated 358 million pets in the United States living in 63 percent of American households.

Eleven U.S. states already have "Animals in Disaster" laws: California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, and Virginia.

A resolution recently passed in New Mexico, and similar legislation is pending in Oregon, Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Iowa, Montana, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Texas.