

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 463 (Michelle Rodriguez)

As Amended June 13, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Authorizes a private ambulance owner, or a person who operates ambulances owned or operated by a fire department of a federally recognized Indian tribe, to transport a police canine, or a search and rescue dog, as defined, that is injured in the line of duty to a veterinary clinic or similar facility if there is no other person requiring medical attention or transport at that time. Permits an emergency responder to provide basic first aid to a police canine or search and rescue dog while the dog is being transported. Provides emergency responders with immunity from criminal or civil liability for any injury to the canine that occurs during the transportation or administration of medical care.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Prohibit a contract for the provision of emergency medical response or transport from containing, as a condition of award, a requirement to provide care or transport to police canines or search and rescue dogs;
- 2) Require an ambulance operator that elects to provide transport to police canines or search and rescue dogs pursuant to this bill to develop policies regarding the transport of canines, including, but not limited to, what additional equipment should be carried by the ambulance and any necessary decontamination procedures following the transport of the animal before returning the ambulance to human patient use; and,
- 3) Require the policies to be submitted to, and approved by, the local emergency medical services agency, unless the ambulance is owned or operated by a fire department of a federally recognized Indian tribe.

COMMENTS

Background. The author provided numerous press articles regarding the transport of injured canines across the country. Oftentimes, an ambulance provider is called and asked to transport an injured canine to a veterinarian. Committee staff conducted an informal survey of several canine officers and was told that most canine handlers currently just "scoop and run" an injured canine and drive it themselves in the back of their car to whatever veterinarian facility is closest.

Medical care for police canines. The National Police Dog Foundation is a charity that assists with the purchase, training, and medical care for canines. According to their website, there are over 14 veterinarians who volunteer to provide discounted medical care for canines in California, most of them located in the southern portion of the state.

Police canines killed or injured. An internet website, the "*Officer Down Memorial Page*" tracks K-9s killed in the line of duty. The site has data broken down by state, listing over 35 fatalities in California, with the oldest entry dating back to 1980. There does not appear to be any publicly collected data available regarding the number of K-9s injured in the line of duty. A 2025 article published online in the journal *Police Practice and Research* titled, "*Police K-9 line-of-duty deaths and heatstroke 2000–2023*," notes that research focusing on the deaths of police canine

officers is almost nonexistent. In one of the only existing studies on the topic, published in the *Contemporary Justice Review* in 2019 found that, of the 96 police canine fatalities analyzed between 2011 and 2015, roughly a quarter of deaths were the result of gunfire. However, the leading cause of death during this time was heat exhaustion (30.2%), localized in the southern United States during the hotter months of the year.

Other states. Colorado enacted legislation in 2014 which granted limited authority to emergency medical service providers to voluntarily provide "pre-veterinary emergency care" to certain domesticated animals. In 2017, Illinois passed legislation substantially similar to this bill.

According to the Author

Police canines are more than just working animals, they are dedicated partners in law enforcement, risking their lives to protect officers and the public. These highly trained dogs serve on the front lines, tracking dangerous suspects, detecting illegal substances, and shielding their handlers from harm. Their presence saves lives, yet when they are critically injured in the line of duty, their access to lifesaving emergency care is often delayed due to outdated legal restrictions. The risks these canines face are not hypothetical, they are real and frequent. The author notes that in Los Angeles, three police canines were recently wounded during a violent standoff, each requiring urgent medical attention. In Vacaville, a K-9 was shot while confronting an armed suspect, a stark reminder that these animals face the same dangers as their human counterparts. Yet, when these heroes are injured, emergency medical personnel are often prohibited from providing immediate care or even transporting them to a veterinary hospital. Instead, officers must scramble to find alternative means of transport, wasting precious minutes that could mean the difference between life and death. The author states that this is unacceptable. Police canines are not expendable assets; they are valued members of law enforcement who deserve the same urgency and access to care as any first responder injured in the line of duty. The author concludes that we cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the gaps in current law that force these animals to suffer when help is within reach.

Arguments in Support

The California State Sheriffs' Association (CSSA) supports this bill and states that police canines play a vital role in law enforcement, assisting officers in detecting contraband, tracking suspects, and protecting their handlers. These highly trained animals often face dangerous situations in the line of duty, putting them at risk of serious injury. However, despite their critical role, emergency medical personnel are often restricted in their ability to provide immediate care or transport for injured police canines. CSSA notes that this bill will explicitly authorize licensed ambulance operators to transport injured police canines when no human patients require immediate assistance, while allowing paramedics and EMTs to provide emergency medical treatment to injured police canines at the scene or during transport without legal barriers. CSSA concludes that this proposal ensures that police dogs—who often suffer injuries in the line of duty—can receive faster medical attention.

Arguments in Opposition

None.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, negligible state costs.

VOTES:**ASM HEALTH: 16-0-0**

YES: Bonta, Chen, Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Rogers, Carrillo, Flora, Mark González, Krell, Patel, Patterson, Celeste Rodriguez, Sanchez, Schiavo, Sharp-Collins, Stefani

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Sanchez, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 69-0-10

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Carrillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
ABS, ABST OR NV: Alanis, Arambula, Bennett, Caloza, Castillo, Jeff Gonzalez, Hart, Quirk- Silva, Ramos, Stefani

SENATE FLOOR: 35-0-5

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood- Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener
ABS, ABST OR NV: Alvarado-Gil, Becker, Padilla, Reyes, Umberg

UPDATED

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