



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0723-2025, **Version:** *

Res. No. 723

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A10660/S9915, also known as the Protecting Animals Walking on the Street (PAWS) Act, to add the term companion animals to the list of possible victim classes should a driver fail to exercise due care to avoid striking pedestrians and to increase the fine for striking a pet with a vehicle and leaving the scene without reporting the incident.

By Council Members Schulman, Louis, Brannan, Rivera and Krishnan

Whereas, The PAWS Act, A10660/S9915, sponsored and introduced by Assembly Member Tony Simone and State Senator Andrew Gounardes, respectively, was introduced to the State Assembly on July 22, 2024, and to the State Senate on September 18, 2024; and

Whereas, Section 1146 of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL) does not include pets as possible victims when a driver fails to exercise due care in avoiding collisions with pedestrians; and,

Whereas, The PAWS Act would include the term companion animal, defined as “any dog or cat, and shall also mean any other domesticated animal normally maintained in or near the household of the owner or person who cares for such other domesticated animal,” to the list of victims included under Section 1146; and,

Whereas, The penalty for violating Section 1146 is either a fine of not more than \$750, imprisonment for no more than 15 days, or participation in a vehicle accident prevention course for a first offense, and for a second offense occurring less than five years from the first offense, the violation rises to a class B misdemeanor punishable by a fine of no more than \$1,000 and any other penalties provided for such an offense by law; and

Whereas, The current penalty for striking horses, dogs, cats, or cattle with a vehicle and failing to report the incident under Section 601 of the VTL is a maximum fine of \$100 for the first offense and a fine greater than \$50 but no greater than \$200 for the second offense; and,

Whereas, These fines are roughly equivalent to those administered for an illegal U-turn; and,

Whereas, The PAWS Act would amend Section 601 to raise the penalty of a first offense to a maximum fine of \$500, and of a second offense to a fine of no less than \$200 and no more than \$750; and,

Whereas, Estimates show there are approximately over 1.1 million household dogs and cats in New York City; and

Whereas, According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), few rules exist regarding pet safety on roadways in the United States; and

Whereas, According to the AVMA, there are no data accounting for the number of animals killed or injured in car accidents, including when a pet is hit by a car, thus highlighting the lack of attention payed historically to this issue at the federal, state, and local levels; and

Whereas, According to a New York Times article published June 23, 2024, the price of veterinary care has soared more than 60 percent nationally over the past decade; and

Whereas, According to an ABC7 news article published on August 22, 2024, a family in Mill Basin, Brooklyn lost their dog when it was struck by vehicle while crossing the street in July of 2023, and despite going to the Kings County Supreme Court, there was little recourse for the family of the dog to find justice under the current laws; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A10660/S9915, also known as the PAWS Act, to add the term companion animals to the list of possible victim classes should a driver fail to exercise due care to avoid striking pedestrians and to increase the fine for striking a pet with a vehicle and leaving the scene without reporting the incident.

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