REPORT ON LEGISLATION
BY THE ANIMAL LAW COMMITTEE

A.2232 M. of A. Santabarbara
S.3826 Sen. Marchione

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to establishing March thirteenth as a day of commemoration to be known as “K9 Veterans Day”

THIS LEGISLATION IS APPROVED

SUMMARY OF THE LEGISLATION

Under the proposed bill, the State of New York would recognize March 13 of each year as “K9 Veterans Day.” The proposal would amend New York Executive Law section 168-a to commemorate the canines that serve in the United States military and in other capacities. The bill seeks to recognize the service these dogs provide to our country and to honor their work and sacrifice.1

JUSTIFICATION

Joseph White, a former military dog handler, pioneered the national effort to recognize March 13 as K9 Veterans Day.2 The date marks the creation of the U.S. Army’s canine unit, the “K9 Corps,” on March 13, 1942.3 White’s hope was that over time the entire country would recognize the day.

Overview of Canine Service

The U.S. Army formed its canine unit during World War II, following the attack on Pearl Harbor.4 By the end of the war, approximately 10,000 dogs had been trained to assist with the

1 See Sponsor’s Memo, New York State Assembly Bill. A02232, New York State Senate Bill, S03826 http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&bn=A02232&term=2015&Summary=Y&Actions=Y&Votes=Y&Memo=Y&Text=Y. All online sources cited in this report were last visited on May 18, 2016.
2 Id.
war effort in various capacities, including in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.\textsuperscript{5} Dogs also were used extensively in the Vietnam War, where approximately 4,000 dogs and 10,000 human handlers were employed.\textsuperscript{6} During the Vietnam War alone, military dogs and their handlers are credited with saving more than 10,000 lives.\textsuperscript{7}

Dogs continue to be used in military engagements. At the high point of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States had approximately 2,500 canines in the field.\textsuperscript{8} Many of these dogs had the dangerous task of using their sense of smell to identify improvised explosive devices, risking (and at times, losing) their lives for their human counterparts.\textsuperscript{9}

In addition to military service, canines protect our country in other ways. K9 Veterans Day seeks to honor these other types of canine servants, such as Customs Dogs, Search and Rescue Dogs, Border Patrol Dogs and Secret Service Dogs. New York’s proposed bill is intended to recognize all such canine groups on K9 Veterans Day.\textsuperscript{10}

**Importance of Commemoration**

Veterans Day is celebrated as a national holiday on November 11 of each year in order to “honor America’s veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.”\textsuperscript{11} The K9 Veterans Day movement seeks similar honor and recognition for America’s canine heroes. Designating a specific date for these dogs raises public awareness about their unique sacrifice and dedication and presents an opportunity for events and activities honoring them.

Paying special recognition to canine veterans is also meaningful to their human handlers. These individuals train the dogs and work with them in the field, resulting in a unique and special bond between human and dog. Celebrating K9 Veterans Day would bring attention to the contributions of these handlers while offering a designated opportunity for them to honor their canine companions.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Michael Paterniti, *The Dogs of War*, NAT’T GEOGRAPHIC (June 2014), [http://ngm-nationalgeographic.com/2014/06/war-dogs/paterniti-text](http://ngm-nationalgeographic.com/2014/06/war-dogs/paterniti-text).
\item \textsuperscript{9} Id.; see Lisa Rogak, *Dogs of War: Photos Remembering the Military’s Canine Heroes*, Huffington Post, (July 27, 2012), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/28/military-dogs-war-memorial-day_n_1545926.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/28/military-dogs-war-memorial-day_n_1545926.html).
\item \textsuperscript{10} Sponsor’s Memo, New York State Assembly Bill. A02232, New York State Senate Bill, S03826, supra note 1.
\item \textsuperscript{12} See Paterniti, supra note 8; Rogak, supra note 9.
\end{itemize}
National Movement

To date, at least eleven states have passed laws recognizing K9 Veterans Day. Florida was the first state to do so in 2009,13 and it has been followed by New Hampshire, New Jersey, Delaware, Illinois, California, Michigan, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia.14 By passing this bill, New York would join the growing national effort to recognize K9 Veterans Day.

Moreover, recognizing K9 Veterans Day comports with New York’s existing statutory scheme. New York’s Executive Law currently recognizes, among others, the following dates of commemoration honoring service to our country: “Vietnam Veterans’ Day” (March 29th), “POW Recognition Day” (April 9th), “Women Veterans Recognition Day” (June 12th), and “Korean War Veterans’ Day” (June 25th).15

CONCLUSION

Because of the valuable service canine veterans provide to our country and the growing national effort to recognize their dedication, the Committee supports this proposed bill.

Animal Law Committee
Lori Barrett, Chair

June 2016

13 Carpenter, supra note 3.


15 New York State Assembly Bill. A02232, New York State Senate Bill, S03826, supra note 1.