

**PROPOSAL:** The Police K-9 Bill of Rights

**SUMMARY:** To create a bill relating to quality of life care and treatment of K-9 Police Officers both during their service and after their retirement.

**SPECIFIC GOALS:**

- 1) Provide medical benefits for retired police K-9s to include veterinary care, food and other items for their well-being for the remainder of the dog's life. This requirement is effective upon the transfer of ownership of the dog from the law enforcement agency to the former handler or adopter of the dog.
- 2) Reclassify Police K-9s as canine law enforcement officers, not as equipment.
- 3) Provide cremation services for dogs that have retired from the agency's service.
- 4) Police K-9s will receive the benefits of safety equipment while on the job such as bullet proof vests, paw protectors, and other equipment to help them in their daily job functions.
- 5) Provide Final Rest services to include cremation and recognition of service.

**FUNDING:**

By amending the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, and re-directing 2% of the cash seized by a police K-9 into a third party general fund to pay for medical benefits for retired police K-9s. This third party fund can be administered by multiple non-profits already concerned with the welfare of police K-9s.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Police K-9** – Any dog that is owned by or employed by a law enforcement agency for the principal purpose of aiding in the detection of criminal activity, enforcement of laws, and apprehension of offenders; or the detection of missing persons, including but not limited to persons who are lost, trapped under debris as the result of a natural, manmade or technological disaster; or are drowning victims.

**Retired Police K-9** – A canine law enforcement officer, who can no longer work due to age or a medical condition, who has officially had its ownership transferred from the law enforcement agency to its handler removing him from active duty.

**Law Enforcement Agency** – A federal, state or local agency or political subdivision having primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of crime or the enforcement of the penal, traffic, game, regulatory, or highway laws of any state and local agency if its agents and officers are empowered by law to conduct criminal investigations and make arrests.

**Veterinary Care** – Services provided by a licensed veterinarian or a specialist referred by a licensed veterinarian to include, but not limited to, annual wellness exams, vaccines, internal and external parasite prevention, testing and treatment for illness and disease, medication, emergency care surgeries, and euthanasia.

**REASONS FOR THE POLICE K-9 BILL OF RIGHTS:**

- 1) To reduce animal suffering while waiting for administrations to make financial decisions by re-classifying them as living beings instead of generic equipment like a desk or chair. Health decisions need to be made within 12-24 hours if an animal is in pain and the decision needs to be made as to whether the animal will be taken care of by its department or if it is to be retired and taken care of by its handler making it eligible for benefits under this bill. (See Exhibits 3 & 5)
- 2) To reduce the financial burden placed on one individual for the care and treatment of a faithful public servant that has protected all of us in ways that we probably don't even realize. (See Exhibit 2)
- 3) Throughout this country the K-9s are largely responsible for finding the illegal cash, drugs and contraband yet they can't benefit from it because they are currently equipment.
- 4) To eliminate unfair financial burdens thrust on handlers because of their devotion to their 24/7 partner. Since all costs of a retired police K-9 currently transfer to the handler or adopter of the dog at the time of retirement, there are signs of departmental abuse where a K-9 will be retired without warning so they don't have to pay the veterinarian bill. (See Exhibit 4)

**EXHIBIT 1**

(From an email to The National K-9 Working Dog, Inc.)

Jay,

As we have discussed in the past, while a canine is in service with the Delaware State Police, all of the veterinary, food and medicine expenses are covered by the State. However, once a canine retires, the handler incurs all of these expenses for the remainder of the canine's lifetime. It would be great to see a program established that would cover these expenses once a canine retires.

Annually on average, the Delaware State Police Canine Unit alerts on approximately \$500,000 in drug tainted Unites States Currency. I feel that your idea of taking a small percentage of this seized currency and giving it back to retired canines will go a long way in ensuring the quality of life during their retirement years.

Thanks in advance for all that you have done for our unit over the last couple of years. It is greatly appreciated. Take care.

Jeff

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## EXHIBIT 2

Hello, my name is Mark Windsor, a retired K-9 Handler/Trainer/OIC from the Delaware State Police. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce my retired K-9 partner, a 14-yr. old Hungarian German Shepherd named Cezar and myself. I am in my 21<sup>st</sup> year in Law Enforcement, and in the year 2000 I entered into the K-9 Unit with my partner Cezar. We were both green, and as a team we went through the patrol certification program where we learned obedience, obstacle courses, tracking, building/area searches, and criminal apprehension. In 2001, we cross-trained in explosive detection, and worked diligently in the field conducting countless school, business searches for bomb threats after the 9/11 attacks.



Together, through 10 years of service we kept the citizens/visitors of Delaware, and each other safe until we retired from the unit in 2010. It was a bittersweet conclusion to a very successful career, with numerous apprehensions with/without bites, numerous K-9 tracks in all types of environments / terrain, numerous explosive / bomb threat searches, and well over 300 K-9 demonstrations.

I was still very fortunate to have Cezar retire with me at home after giving me his ALL as a service Police K-9. However, as one can imagine the years of police work had taken a toll on K-9 Cezar, particularly with hip dysplasia, and he required adequate injections, and pain relief medications to keep him free from pain and comfortable during his golden years. The State Police did an excellent job with health care, and equipment needs while Cezar was active, but unfortunately the unit did not have a retirement program for their working police dogs.

During the early stages of Cezar's retirement I was fortunate enough to have been approached by Mr. Jay Meranchik, President and Founder of The National K-9 Working Dog, Inc. At the time, he explained his mission of wanting to protect and improve the lives, and well being of working and retired police, search and rescue, and service dogs through outreach, advocacy, education, and support. He further explained that we wished to start his mission with K-9 Cezar in the First State, and being a dog lover, and wanting what is best for my retired partner, I was on board. Mr. Meranchik's heart felt interest in wanting to give the respect to working dogs was, and is overwhelming, and I can not begin to explain what his organization's contributions has meant to Cezar and myself. He also currently assists our State Police K-9 Unit with establishing school programs in the Delaware as well as working with pharmaceutical companies to obtain flea, and tick medications for the active working K-9s. As a trainer and owner of a service dog himself, Jay's vision of making sure that every working K-9 has the opportunity to have a healthy and comfortable retirement they deserve is well underway.

In talking to numerous agencies that have K-9 programs there seems to be an overwhelming consensus that they, too, have no retirement programs for their faithful partners. I have become a volunteer member on the board myself, believing in this worthwhile cause, and have drafted this letter to help agencies become informed of this organization. It is my belief, also, that through creating a national database registry for all working dogs, these dogs can be identified and given the critical equipment needed to protect their lives and well being while doing their jobs serving and protecting the public, and as in my case gaining the much needed assistance to keep my faithful K-9 partner healthy, and happy in his retirement years.

Please join us in supporting this worthwhile organization, so we can continue meeting the goals, awareness, education, and mission to assist our faithful partners, because they no doubt give us their unconditional love, devotion, and support. Thank you for your time, and as always Be Safe!

Respectfully,  
Mark Windsor

**EXHIBIT #3 (Pg 1 of 2)**

(This situation is still in limbo as of June 27, 2012 – a decision has not been made)

June 18, 2012

Dear Jay,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me this past weekend. Since Vader's injury occurred, our household has been turned upside down and it was very comforting to talk with someone who knows exactly what we are up against. I know I gave you a brief synopsis of what happened on the telephone but I thought I should start from the beginning so you and your colleagues have a better understanding.

Vader is my 6 year old all black German Shepherd partner who came from the Netherlands. Vader was 15 months old when I picked him up from a Kennel in Indiana. Vader and I received our initial training at the Illinois State Police Academy in Springfield, Illinois. Vader is a dual purpose K-9 who is trained in narcotic detection, tracking, article searches/evidence recovery and apprehension. Vader and I recertified on a yearly basis at ISP and we trained twice a month with other local K-9 teams. We live in NW Illinois. For the most part our county (Jo Daviess) is rural. Vader was predominantly used for narcotic detection and tracking lost or fleeing subjects. US HWY 20 runs through our county and is the major HWY that connects Chicago and Rockford Illinois to Dubuque and Waterloo Iowa. Vader and I had numerous arrests where subjects were transporting narcotics between these cities. Many of these arrests were engine compartment finds and hidden compartment finds that would never have been located without Vader. Vader has also successfully tracked and located lost children, Alzheimer patients and suspects who have attempted to flee police.



In April, Vader and I were training in Savanna Illinois. Vader and I were conducting a tracking exercise and arrived at a drainage ditch which was dry. Instead of tracking down and up through the ditch Vader attempted to jump over the ditch. When Vader jumped he did not completely clear the other side, his hind legs slammed into the ditch. Vader started walking with his left hind leg in the air and his hips did not seem right. I took Vader to our local veterinarian who advised us that he should see a neurologist. Our Vet recommended that we take Vader to the University of Madison Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital which is approximately 2 hours from our home in Stockton Illinois.

We brought Vader to Madison and he was seen by Neurologist Dr. Joy Delamaide. Upon Vader's Neurology exam, it was determined that an MRI would be required to arrive at an official diagnosis. This is where the real nightmare begins.

The MRI cost approximately \$3,000.00. I phoned the Sheriff and asked his permission to go ahead with the MRI while we were in Madison. The sheriff advised me that he would have to take this situation to "committee" and that he could not make the decision himself. After a few weeks, Vader's MRI was actually approved. I brought Vader back to Madison for his MRI which indicated that he had four intervertebral disc herniations which were causing Vader's neurologic issues. The doctors recommended surgery to alleviate the compression on Vader's spine. The surgical procedure was estimated at \$3,000.00. The sheriff would not approve the surgery because "you can get a new dog for what Vader's surgery would cost". Instead of approving the surgery, the sheriff wanted me to try taking Vader to a chiropractor even though the doctors in Madison strongly advised against it. I took Vader to a chiropractor once a week for a month. By taking him to the chiropractor, Vader's neurological issues got worse. Memorial Day, I awoke to find Vader struggling to get up and when he did he was staggering and dragging his left hind leg. To make matters worse, his bottom was very peculiar looking and ended up being

**EXHIBIT #3 (Pg 2 of 2)**

inflamed and bloody. I phoned the UW Madison Animal Hospital and they wanted to see him immediately. I phoned the sheriff to advise him that Vader's condition had worsened and I told him that I needed him to make a decision. I was very emotional and told him it was not fair to let Vader go on in pain. The sheriff officially retired Vader on Memorial Day.

I brought Vader back to Madison and upon exam it was determined that Vader's neurological issues had progressed and he now had developed Perianal Fistulas. It was still recommended that Vader have spinal surgery however, surgery is now on hold until Perianal Fistulas are under control. The medication for this condition cost \$411.00 a month. And to make matters worse, because too much time elapsed and Vader's condition has progressed before surgery is performed the doctors want to do another MRI which cost \$3,000.00.

My husband and I are both deputies and we have four children between us. Financially, I cannot afford all of Vader's medical expenses. I feel helpless and guilty. Vader is an awesome dog who deserves better. He is not just a piece of equipment; he was an officer and is part of my family.

I was able to get an interview with our local paper and I am attaching it along with some photos of Vader. If there is anything you can do or know of someone who may be able to help Vader please let me know. At this point I am truly desperate.

We are organizing a fund raiser which will take place during Stockton's 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities and have received some small donations since the newspaper article was released.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Lisa Duerr

**EXHIBIT #4**

(Excerpt from email to The National K-9 Working Dog, Inc.)

On 2/16/12 8:52 PM, "Scott Branner" wrote:

Jay,

K9 Charley and I have worked together since June 2007. She is my second working dog. She injured her knee on duty in the fall of 2010. On Jan 2, 2011 (one year before her surgery) The Vets ofc diagnosed her with a possible ACL injury. This problem became worse during the summer of 2011. At one point the Vet placed her on an anti-inflammatory. In Dec 2011, the knee became unstable to the point she was carrying the leg and not putting any weight on it.

Surgery was scheduled for Jan 2, 2012. The Police Administration was advised of the pending surgery two weeks before. The procedure was performed By Dr John Dee @ the Hollywood Animal Hospital at a cost of \$2,500.00. I picked her up from the animal hospital the day after surgery, Jan. 3, 2012. That afternoon, I was called to the Asst. Chief's ofc and informed that THEY had decided to retire the K9 and were not going to pay for the surgery. I was given a form letter releasing the k9 to my custody/ownership. This form was back dated to Sunday Jan 1, 2012, (the day before her surgery), leaving me with the bill.



Det. K-9 Handler Scott Branner (ret.)  
Cell# 954 445 2541  
Hollywood, FL Police Department

**FOOTNOTE: Charley's Stats – 5 Yr Career**

Seized:     \$1,461,459 - U.S. Currency  
              3,027 LBS - Marijuana  
              206 LBS - Cocaine  
              548 GRAMS - Meth  
              154 GRAMS – Crack

## EXHIBIT 5

(From [sbynews.blogspot.com/.../ocean-city-k-9-officer-resigned-today.html](http://sbynews.blogspot.com/.../ocean-city-k-9-officer-resigned-today.html))

### **Title: Officer Earl Campbell turned in his resignation today**

Officer Campbell's K-9 Partner Charlie had undergone a previous surgery in 2009 in which the scar tissue caused even more problems down the road. Charlie was taken out of service this year and the OCPD turned over ownership to Charlie to Officer Campbell in November.

In time, Charlie got to a point in which he was suffering quite badly and became paralyzed. Officer Campbell made attempts to convince the powers to be in Ocean City to front an additional \$6,000.00 for another surgery in which Officer Campbell felt those powers to be took too long to give him an answer, so Officer Campbell reached into his own pocket to pay for the surgery.

Because of these delays, Officer Campbell turned in his resignation today with the OCPD. Charlie has had the surgery and is now recovering.

**Folks, it's important to know that the Ocean City Police Department takes great pride in the health and well being of all of their animals. There are channels and procedures in which cases like this, (in government) whereas instant decisions are almost impossible to make. There are some, (including me) people in which making a \$6,000.00 decision for an animal, (as much as I love animals) would be made to put the animal down, especially if it is suffering and or there's even a chance it could further suffer down the road.**

**In my honest opinion, Charlie has already been through one surgery in which we are now seeing the long term results of such. I can, (however) completely understand and respect Officer Campbell's decision to follow through with such a surgery and my hat is certainly tipped to him for fronting the expense of doing so.**

In this case, Officer Campbell felt that certain powers to be didn't respond quickly enough and as a result of such he has resigned. Because this is a personnel issue, the OCPD cannot comment at this time. However, I want it known that I personally know several of the people involved with the OCPD animals and while I do not want to speak on their behalf, I will say these are what I call, "Good People" and animal lovers. There are two sides to every story and in this case I am the recipient of only one side.

Not that long ago, (I believe this past summer) we did an article on another K-9 from the OCPD having to be put down because of a sudden illness. The Officer is still with the OCPD. What many do not recognize is that these animals are not just expensive right out of the gate, there's no guarantee their health will remain good until retirement age. In the mean time, Officers become extremely close to these animals and its only fitting that emotions come into play in situations such as Officer Campbell's case.

We wish Officer Campbell a healthy retirement along with our best hopes and wishes in Charlie's recovery and future. This Team, Campbell and Charlie will certainly be missed by the citizens of Ocean City and we thank them for their service.

In closing, Officer Campbell told me, "It cost \$6,170 but worth every single penny!!!!!!" He went on to say he was getting out of the law enforcement profession all together.



## **EXHIBIT 6**

(This is example of a police department having the funds and the support of its citizens to take care of their K-9s)

### **Title: K-9 Bodie reported recovering from jaw surgery**

By Cathy Locke

clocke@sacbee.com

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Bodie, the Sacramento police dog shot during a police chase last month, is recovering from jaw surgery.

Police spokeswoman Michele Gigante said the three-hour surgery Tuesday afternoon at VCA Sacramento Veterinary Referral Center went well.

Surgeons installed a metal cleat in the German shepherd's jaw. Bone marrow also was taken from Bodie's shoulder and packed into the broken jaw to aid in bone regeneration, Gigante said. The dog is expected to be hospitalized for at least another day.

Bodie was shot twice through his left jaw and once in his paw. His medical bills have been offset by numerous donations, which totaled \$20,000 as of May 26.

Read more here:

<http://www.sacbee.com/2012/06/27/4591744/police-k-9-bodie-reported-recovering.html#storylink=cpy>

*\*The National K-9 Working Dog has been following this story since Police K-9 Bodie was shot*