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Senate reverses course on spay and neuter legislation

Majority Leader seeks to curb \$250 million pet overpopulation crisis, reduce euthanasia

SACRAMENTO – After years of failed attempts to control the pet population and ease the strain on California’s overburdened shelters and shelter workers, the California Legislature has reversed course and passed Senate Bill 250 after much debate.

The California State Senate today approved the contentious measure by Senate Majority Leader Dean Florez (D-Shafter), aimed at reducing the number of unwanted pets in California and thereby greatly reducing the need for euthanasia, by a vote of 21-16.

California taxpayers spend more than \$250 million a year to kill half a million unwanted pets and house twice that number.

Senate Bill 250, so numbered to represent the high cost of this tragedy, calls on Californians to spay or neuter their dogs or obtain a license to keep an unaltered animal. “The Pet Responsibility Act” also requires that cats which are allowed to roam freely be spayed or neutered.

When the same sort of ordinance was adopted in Santa Cruz, euthanasia there dropped by 60 percent. Florez believes the bill will greatly reduce the need for euthanasia and allow much-needed tax dollars to be redirected to more positive and constructive purposes.

“I think we can all agree that the quarter of a billion dollars we spend to house and kill unwanted pets could be much better spent protecting health care for the elderly and education for our children,” Florez said.

Florez agreed today to exempt hunting and working dogs from the measure and to ensure it will not apply to an animal escaping its yard for the first time.

“Critics of past efforts to encourage spaying and neutering have said clearly that any legislative solution to our shelter crisis must focus on owner responsibility, and I believe this measure does just that,” Florez said when introducing the bill.

“Those who own animals responsibly should be united in support of our effort to cut down on the killing of pets in shelters, the financial strain current policy has on local governments and the emotional toll on shelter workers.”

Senate Bill 250 now heads to the California State Assembly for consideration.

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