



Sub. S.B. 101
125th General Assembly
(As Passed by the Senate)

Sens. Schuler, Fedor, Goodman, Spada, Stivers, Armbruster

BILL SUMMARY

- Authorizes the issuance of Pets license plates with the contributions to be used for the support of programs for the sterilization of dogs and cats and educational programs concerning the proper veterinary care of those animals.
- Requires the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to collect a contribution not exceeding \$40 for each registration or renewal of Pets license plates.
- Requires a nonprofit corporation (referenced as the "Ohio Pet Fund") to establish eligibility criteria for organizations and pet owners who may receive financial assistance from the Pets Program Funding Board and to appoint the board to review applications and disburse funds.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

Pets license plates

(R.C. 4503.551)

Under the bill, the owner or lessee of any passenger car, noncommercial motor vehicle, motor home, or other vehicle of a class approved by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles may apply to the Registrar for the issuance of "Pets" license plates. The application for the license plates may be combined with a request for a special reserved license plate (sometimes referred to as "vanity plates") provided in current law. Upon receipt of the completed application and payment of the applicable taxes and fees as explained below, the Registrar is required to issue to the applicant the appropriate vehicle registration and a set of Pets license plates with a validation sticker, or a validation sticker alone once the person already has Pets license plates.

In addition to the letters and numbers ordinarily inscribed on license plates, Pets license plates must be inscribed with words and markings designed by the Ohio Pet Fund (an organization designated in the bill and described below) and approved by the Registrar. Pets license plates must bear county identification stickers that identify the county of registration by name or number.

Pets license plates and validation stickers are issued upon payment of a contribution of an amount not to exceed \$40 as determined by the Ohio Pet Fund that is deposited in the existing License Plate Contribution Fund, payment of the regular state and local taxes and license fees prescribed in current law, a fee of \$10 for the purpose of compensating the Bureau of Motor Vehicles for additional services required in the issuing of Pets license plates, and compliance with all other applicable laws relating to the registration of motor vehicles. If the application for Pets license plates is combined with a request for a vanity plate, the applicant also must pay the additional fee specified for those plates.

The money the Registrar collects as contributions under the bill must be deposited in the existing License Plate Contribution Fund for distribution to the Pets Program Funding Board. The bill also requires the Registrar to pay to the Pets Program Funding Board "any other money from any other source, including donations, gifts, and grants, that is designated by the source. . . ." The board must use this money only to support programs for the sterilization of dogs and cats and for educational programs concerning the proper veterinary care of those animals.

The Registrar also is required to deposit in the existing State Bureau of Motor Vehicles Fund the additional \$10 fee that the applicant for registration pays for the purpose of compensating the Bureau.

The Ohio Pet Fund

(R.C. 955.201)

The bill requires the Ohio Pet Fund (see **COMMENT 1**) to do all of the following:

(1) Establish eligibility criteria for organizations that may receive financial assistance from the Pets Program Funding Board. Those organizations include animal shelters, nonprofit veterinary programs for the sterilization of dogs and cats, and tax-exempt charitable organizations the primary purpose of which is to support programs for the sterilization of dogs and cats and educational programs concerning the proper veterinary care of those animals.

(2) Establish procedures for applying for financial assistance and disbursing funds from the Pets Program Funding Board; the application

procedures must require the submission of detailed proposals for the intended uses of the assistance;

(3) Establish eligibility criteria for sterilization and educational programs for which assistance may be granted and eligibility criteria for individuals who seek sterilization for their dogs and cats from organizations receiving funds;

(4) Advertise or otherwise provide notification of the availability of financial assistance for eligible organizations;

(5) Design markings to be inscribed on Pets license plates.

Eligibility of individuals for subsidized dog or cat sterilization services

Under the bill, there are three scenarios that may qualify an owner of a dog or cat for dog or cat sterilization services subsidized by money from the Pets Program Funding Board:

(1) The income of the owner's family does not exceed 150% of the federal poverty guideline (see **COMMENT 2**).

(2) The owner, or a family member residing with the owner, is a beneficiary or recipient of one of eight specified government assistance programs, including federal "Section 8" housing; the Ohio Works First Program; Medicaid; Veterans' Administration disability; food stamps; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); supplemental security income; or social security disability.

(3) The owner of the dog or cat submits to the operator of the subsidized sterilization program a certificate of adoption showing that the animal was adopted from either of the following:

(A) A licensed animal shelter; a municipal, county, or regional pound; or a holding and impoundment facility that contracts with a municipal corporation.

(B) A nonprofit corporation operating an animal adoption referral service and whose holding facility is licensed in accordance with state law or a municipal ordinance.

The Ohio Pet Fund must determine the type of documentary evidence that must be presented by a pet owner to show that the family income does not exceed 150% of the federal poverty guidelines or that the owner is eligible under a specified government assistance program.

Pets Program Funding Board

(R.C. 955.202)

The bill creates the Pets Program Funding Board. Appointed by the Ohio Pet Fund, it consists of the following seven members:

- (1) One member who represents an animal control facility or has been appointed an agent of a humane society under Ohio law;
- (2) One Ohio resident who is a member of the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association;
- (3) One member of the general public;
- (4) One member who represents an Ohio animal shelter or other animal facility;
- (5) One member who represents a foster pet organization or an organization that is involved with the sterilization of dogs and cats that does not operate an animal shelter;
- (6) One member who is a breeder of dogs or cats and is a member in good standing with a national breeders club or association;
- (7) One member from the Ohio Pet Fund.

Two initial members' terms expire on January 31 of the first even-numbered year following appointment, and five initial members' terms expire on January 31 of the second odd-numbered year following appointment. Thereafter, members are appointed for two-year terms.

If an eligible organization that is applying for financial assistance from the Pets Program Funding Board is represented by a member on the Board, that member is prohibited from participating in the decision regarding the approval or disapproval of that application. No moneys can be disbursed from the License Plate Contribution Fund to the Pets Program Funding Board until the amount in the Fund that is attributable to contributions paid by motor vehicle registration applicants and to money from any other source (including donations, gifts, and grants designated to be paid to the Board) equals at least \$25,000, or until two years after the bill's effective date, whichever occurs first.

COMMENT

1. The bill defines the "Ohio Pet Fund" to mean a nonprofit corporation organized by that name under R.C. Chapter 1702. (which governs nonprofit corporations) and that consists of humane societies, veterinarians, animal shelters, companion animal breeders, dog wardens, and similar individuals and entities.

2. The bill defines the "federal poverty guideline" as the official poverty guideline as revised annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services in accordance with section 673(2) of the "Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981," 95 Stat. 511, 42 U.S.C.A. 9902, as amended, for a family size equal to the size of the family of the person whose income is being determined.

HISTORY

ACTION	DATE	JOURNAL ENTRY
Introduced	06-18-03	p. 505
Reported, S. Highways & Transportation	02-12-04	p. 1525
Passed Senate (31-1)	03-17-04	p. 1631

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