

PETS Act Becomes Law

The new law compels local and state authorities to submit disaster preparedness plans for pets.

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A bipartisan bill to protect people who own household pets and service animals in the wake of catastrophes, such as last years' Gulf Coast hurricanes, has been signed into law.

The Pets Evacuation and Transportation (PETS) Act, which was introduced by reps. Tom Lantos (D-CA) and Chris Shays (R-CT), became law with President Bush's signature as of Oct. 6.

"Nobody wants to see people needlessly suffer and possibly sacrifice their own safety because they are confronted with the awful prospect of abandoning household animals that are essential to their lives," Lantos said in a statement regarding the new law.

The new PETS law requires local and state jurisdictions to submit disaster preparedness plans that take into account people with household pets and service animals. If the local and state jurisdictions fail to do so, they will not qualify for FEMA grants.

The PETS law also allows FEMA's director to make financial contributions to state and local authorities for animal emergency preparedness purposes.

Additionally, the new PETS law instructs FEMA to make necessary changes to the law to ensure that federal assistance provided in a disaster can assist in the rescue, care and shelter of individuals with household pets and service animals.