

Connecticut Senate Passes “Pets in Disaster” Bill

New legislation mandates that provisions be made for evacuating pets during emergencies.

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The Connecticut state Senate has passed the Pets in Disaster bill, making it one of several states to include cats and other pets, as well as service animals, during disaster or emergency planning.

The Senate unanimously passed the legislation, formally known as H.B. 5186, with a 35 to 0 vote April 25. On April 11, the House voted 131 to 11 in favor of the bill.

The Pets in Disaster bill requires local civil preparedness plans include provisions for evacuating pets and services animals during emergencies. It was sponsored by Representatives Kevin Witkos, Carlo Leone, Bruce Zalaski, John W. Hetherington, Diana S. Urban, Elissa T. Wright, Gail K. Hamm and Patricia M. Widlitz.

The bill now goes to Gov. M. Jodi Rell for review.

In Connecticut, 56 percent of households have a pet, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association. An estimated 358 million pets in the United States live in 63 percent of American households.

Eleven U.S. states already have “Pets in Disaster” laws: California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Vermont and Virginia.

A resolution recently passed in New Mexico, and similar legislation is pending in Oregon Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Iowa, Montana, Nevada, Rhode Island and Texas.