

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 56  
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Culture, Recreation & Tourism  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

A decade ago, the legislature enacted legislation to regulate the ownership or possession of dangerous wild animals and to ensure public safety. Interested parties note that wildlife sanctuaries typically operate under the classification of animal shelters although, the parties assert, a wildlife sanctuary is not, in fact, an animal shelter because the term animal shelter suggests a temporary animal holding and rehabilitation facility rather than a facility that provides long-term housing and care. Observers express concern that, under this reasoning, an accredited or verified wildlife sanctuary is not permitted to house a dangerous wild animal in a county that has not established a process for registering the animals. The parties further assert that legislation is needed to address these issues by exempting certain accredited or verified wildlife sanctuary entities from provisions of law relating to the regulation of dangerous wild animals. The parties also assert that legislation is needed to provide an exemption from local ordinances or leash laws for dogs used in volunteer search and rescue teams. H.B. 56 seeks to achieve these goals.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

H.B. 56 amends the Health and Safety Code to establish that a volunteer search and rescue service dog that is part of a volunteer search and rescue team is not considered a dangerous wild animal for purposes of certain statutory provisions relating to the regulation of animals. The bill prohibits a municipality from adopting or enforcing an ordinance, including a leash law, that restricts the ability of a volunteer search and rescue team to train a service dog for search and rescue or law enforcement purposes.

H.B. 56 amends the provision exempting certain animals from certain statutory provisions relating to the regulation of dangerous wild animals to remove the exemption for an injured, infirm, orphaned, or abandoned dangerous wild animal while being rehabilitated, treated, or cared for by a licensed veterinarian, an incorporated humane society or animal shelter, or a person who holds a rehabilitation permit issued under state law. The bill establishes such an exemption for a sick or injured dangerous wild animal while being rehabilitated or treated by and in the temporary possession of a licensed veterinarian or a person who holds a rehabilitation permit issued under state law for the animal being rehabilitated or treated.

H.B. 56 expands the exemption from certain statutory provisions relating to the regulation of dangerous wild animals to include an organization that is an accredited member of the Zoological Association of America, as well as a wildlife sanctuary that is verified or accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, the American Sanctuary Association and that received initial verification or accreditation from that association before May 1, 2011, or a successor nonprofit organization that is similar to the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries

and is designated by the Department of State Health Services if the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries ceases to exist.

H.B. 56 defines "volunteer search and rescue team" and "wildlife sanctuary."

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, the 91st day after the last day of the legislative session.