SENATE, No. 736

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:
Senator ANTHONY M. BUCCO
District 25 (Morris and Somerset)

SYNOPSIS

Designates Seeing Eye® dog as State Dog.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.

AN ACT designating the Seeing Eye® dog as the New Jersey State Dog and supplementing chapter 9A of Title 52 of the Revised Statues.

WHEREAS, Service dogs help persons with visual impairment achieve greater independence, dignity, and self-confidence, and the dogs themselves are known for their intelligence, loyalty, and gentle temperament; and

WHEREAS, The Seeing Eye is one of the world's premier service dog schools, so much so that the phrase "Seeing Eye® dog" is synonymous with service dogs around the world; and

WHEREAS, The Seeing Eye is a New Jersey institution that has been headquartered in the State since 1931; and

WHEREAS, The current Seeing Eye headquarters includes a 60-acre training center in Morristown and a 330-acre breeding center in Chester; and

WHEREAS, The Seeing Eye has matched over 17,000 people with dogs since its inception; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 1,770 people in the United States and Canada are currently paired with Seeing Eye® dogs; and

WHEREAS, The Seeing Eye receives no funding from the State or federal governments, and is entirely supported by contributions from individuals, foundations, corporations, bequests, and other planned gifts; and

WHEREAS, The Seeing Eye is especially useful to veterans, giving them priority in its application process; and

WHEREAS, The Seeing Eye charges veterans only a nominal one dollar tuition fee for services, which covers the cost of the dog, instruction, transportation, room, board, equipment, and follow-up; and

WHEREAS, These remarkable dogs are trained to guide their handlers around obstacles, alert their handlers to changes in elevation and tripping hazards, and to safely navigate street crossings; and

WHEREAS, Seeing Eye® dogs are unique among service dogs in their capacity for "intelligent disobedience." Seeing Eye® dogs are taught to ignore commands that might jeopardize the safety of the handler, such as crossing against traffic or stepping off a vacant subway platform; and

WHEREAS, Designating the Seeing Eye® dog as the State Dog would honor Seeing Eye® dogs and the impact they have on their handlers and on society at large, and celebrate the charitable spirit of The Seeing Eye; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Seeing Eye® dog is designated as the New Jersey State Dog.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill designates the Seeing Eye® dog as the State Dog of New Jersey.

The Seeing Eye is one of the world's premier service dog training organizations and has been headquartered in New Jersey since 1931.

With facilities in Morristown and Chester, the Seeing Eye pairs specially trained service dogs with persons with visual impairment, greatly improving those persons' independence and mobility. The Seeing Eye is particularly useful to veterans, giving them priority in its application process and charging them only a nominal one dollar fee for services, covering the cost of the dog, instruction, transportation, room, board, equipment, and follow-up.

Seeing Eye® dogs are unique among service dogs in their capacity for "intelligent disobedience." They are taught to ignore commands that might jeopardize the safety of the handler, such as crossing against traffic or stepping off a vacant subway platform. They are renowned for their intelligence, loyalty, and gentle temperament.

Twelve states have designated state dogs. Accordingly, New Jersey should designate the Seeing Eye® dog as the State Dog of New Jersey to honor Seeing Eye® dogs and the impact they have on their handlers and on society at large, and to celebrate the charitable spirit of The Seeing Eye.