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## Laws for Larry – Protecting Montana’s Police Horse (/full-blog/price2)

By: Rebecca Price, Staff Member

Larry, the only police horse in the state of Montana, may soon receive legal protection for serving the citizens of his Livingston, Montana community.[i] Representative Margie MacDonald of Billings introduced House Bill 106 to the Montana House Judiciary Committee on January 12, 2015.[ii]



(<http://www.kfbb.com/story/27831672/montana-bill-to-protect-police-horses-introduced>)

If Montana enacts this piece of legislation, it will follow many states’ codified protection of police horses and dogs from intentional infliction of injury. The Georgia code punishes those who harm police horses or dogs by a felony and upon conviction with one to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.[iii] Ohio’s legislature articulated harsh punishments for assaulting and harassing police horses and dogs.[iv] In line with other states’ legislation, the proposed Montana bill would cause someone who injured police or search or rescue horses to serve at most one year in prison and pay up to a \$5000 fine.[v] According to Officer Jessika Kynett, a police officer and Larry the equine officer’s partner, the Montana statute would simply add police horse to the current police canine protection statute.[vi]

Representative MacDonald stated that the proposed bill would protect “highly trained, highly valuable animals”[vii] that serve the people of Montana. In 2002, Congress passed a law that mandated punishment for the intentional harming of a police animal to range from one year to ten years in prison based upon the degree of harm caused to the animal.[viii] In support of this bill, Senator Jon Kyl stated that law enforcement animals, dogs and horses, are not property and the penalty for harming one of these creatures should be “greater than the penalty for denting a car.”[ix]

Mounted patrol horses are animals that are purchased, or donated, to the police department. The Houston Police Department published its training regimen for police horses. In this department, the potential police horses must undergo an evaluation period to determine the horses’ health. Next, the

horse must complete various obstacles and tasks to determine if the horse will work with the unit. If a horse is accepted to the mounted unit, the horse must continue training with its partner officer and the unit.[x] Proponents of the Montana legislation hope that protection for police and search and rescue horses will encourage the formation of mounted patrol units across the state.[xi]

No animal should be intentionally injured, even animals used in conjunction with police work. These animals are valuable police instrumentalities that completed extensive training. Taxpayer funds have been invested in the care and training of these animals. Trained police horses should receive legal protection to ensure the health and longevity of community funded investments.

[i] Lisa Baumann, *Montana Bill to Protect Police Horses Introduced*, Great Falls Tribune (Jan. 12, 2014, 2:55 PM), <http://www.greatfallstribune.com/story/news/local/2015/01/12/montana-bill-protect-police-horses-introduced/21656007/>.

[ii] *Id.*

[iii] Ga. Code Ann. § 16-11-107.

[iv] Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 2921.321.

[v] Madelyn Beck, *Bill Aims to Protect Equine "Neigh-Sayers"*, Great Falls Tribune (Jan. 12, 2015, 8:08 PM), <http://www.greatfallstribune.com/story/news/politics/2015/01/12/bill-aims-protect-equine-neigh-sayers/21671753/>.

[vi] Lisa Baumann, *Montana Bill to Protect Police Horses Introduced*, The Washington Times (Jan. 12, 2015), <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jan/12/montana-bill-to-protect-police-horses-introduced/>.

[vii] Beck, *supra* note v.

[viii] 18 U.S.C.A. § 1368.

[ix] Animal Law Committee, Report on Legislation: Approved with Recommendations (2013), available at <http://www.nycbar.org/pdf/report/uploads/20072090-ReportregardingS.518reinjuryordethoapolicanimal.pdf>.

[x] *Mounted Patrol – Our Horses*, Houston Police Department, <http://www.houstontx.gov/police/mounted/horses.htm>.

[xi] Baumann, *supra* note vi.

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