



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

Testimony on Senate Bill 64 and Assembly Bill 61

Thank you, committee members, for hearing Senate Bill 64 and Assembly Bill 61 today. This is a bill that is very dear to me as an animal lover.

Simply put, this bill strengthens Wisconsin's animal abuse laws. Right now, the penalty for abusing a fire or police animal is a maximum of 1.5 years in prison with 2 years extended supervision. If the animal is killed that increases to 3 years in prison and 3 years extended supervision. I believe that is totally unacceptable.

People that harm animals are among the most cruel in society. You may have heard stories about notorious serial killers getting their start by harming animals as children, but these stories are more than just anecdotes. According to researchers at the FBI, there is a well-documented link with individuals who show violent behavior towards animals, and those who ultimately commit violence against humans. One 2017 study found that 75% of women that had been victims of domestic abuse reported their partner had previously threatened or intentionally harmed their companion animal.

Now, specific to fire and police animals. These animals are highly trained, invaluable members of the team. Like their human counterparts, they are brave, often going into harm's way, whether that's to save a person's life, stop a crime from occurring, or search and find a criminal. They are heroic. But, just like their human counterparts, they are also targets.

That is why they need extra legal protection. This bill will make the maximum penalty for abusing a fire or police animal 3 years in prison and 3 years extended supervision. If the animal is killed, 5 years in prison and 5 years extended supervision. And frankly, I don't know if that is enough, but it is better than the current law.

People that commit these crimes against innocent animals are cruel and depraved individuals. The evidence shows that people who harm animals are more likely to be violent towards humans too. This bill will both punish and, hopefully, discourage future violent behavior.

Again, thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 64 and Assembly Bill 61 and, I urge your support so that we can start holding serious animal abusers accountable for their actions.

And if anyone is wondering, I have authored other bills to increase penalties for harming all animals, not just police or fire animals, and am working on that again this session. Animal abuse is a serious crime and needs to be treated as such. This bill takes a step toward that.

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Wisconsin State Lodge *Fraternal Order of Police*



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National Trustee

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 64/Assembly Bill 61 **Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**

April 1, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety,

Acts of violence against animals used by law enforcement agencies and fire departments are a growing problem in Wisconsin, driven by a lack of respect for their vital role and a deliberate intent to attack the officers and firefighters they serve alongside. These animals—trained to detect narcotics, locate missing persons, apprehend suspects, and protect communities during emergencies—are targeted, injured, or killed by individuals who view them as extensions of the authorities they oppose. Such attacks not only threaten public safety but also undermine the ability of agencies to carry out their duties, imposing emotional and financial burdens that current penalties fail to adequately address. We offer full support for Senate Bill 64, mirrored by Assembly Bill 61, which tackles this issue by strengthening penalties to ensure accountability and deter future acts of disrespect and aggression.

Police and fire animals—such as K-9 units—are integral to the safety and security of our communities. They serve with loyalty, often in high-risk situations that safeguard both their handlers and the public. An attack on these animals is an assault on public safety itself, reflecting a broader contempt for the law enforcement and firefighting professionals who rely on them.

Under current law, intentionally injuring a police or fire animal is a Class I felony, punishable by up to 3.5 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine, while causing the death of such an animal is a Class H felony, with a maximum of 6 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Senate Bill 64 increases these penalties to better match the gravity of these offenses. The bill raises the penalty for injuring a police or fire animal to a Class H felony, with up to 6 years of imprisonment or a \$10,000 fine, or both, and elevates the penalty for causing the death of such an animal to a Class G felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison or a \$25,000 fine, or both. These changes provide a stronger deterrent and ensure justice for acts that target our animal partners as a means of attacking law enforcement and firefighters.

This legislation recognizes the essential contributions of these animals. K-9 units, for instance, are vital in drug-related arrests, missing person searches, and suspect apprehensions, often reducing the need for escalated force and enhancing officer safety. The training and replacement cost of a single K-9 unit can exceed \$20,000, not including veterinary care for injuries, which can quickly escalate into the tens of thousands—costs that taxpayers should not bear due to criminal acts rooted in disrespect. Senate Bill 64's enhanced penalties, combined with its provision for restitution, address these impacts directly, holding offenders accountable for the full scope of harm they inflict on both the animals and the agencies they serve.



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We urge the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety to advance Senate Bill 64 promptly. Passage of this legislation will reinforce Wisconsin's commitment to protecting those who serve—both human and animal—and strengthen the trust between law enforcement and the public.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Ryan Windorff
President

The Fraternal Order of Police is the world's largest organization of sworn law enforcement officers, with over 379,000 members in more than 2,200 lodges. The Wisconsin State Lodge proudly represents more than 3,600 members in 33 lodges throughout the state. We are the voice of those who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving our communities. We are committed to improving the working conditions of law enforcement officers and the safety of those we serve through education, legislation, information, community involvement, and employee representation.



April 1, 2025

To: Chairman Wanggaard and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

From: Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association

Re: Support Senate Bill 64, Injury or Death of a Police or Fire Canine

Chairman Wanggaard, thank you for your willingness to hold a hearing on this legislation. We would also like to thank you and Representative Nedweski for introducing this bill.

We urge support for Senate Bill 64.

Under current law, any person who intentionally injures a police dog may be charged with a Class I felony, and anyone who intentionally causes the death of a police dog may be charged with a Class H felony.

Senate Bill 64 increases the penalty for injuring a police dog to a Class H felony and those who intentionally kill a police dog may be charged with a Class G felony. A Class H felony is punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 or up to six years in prison, or both, and a Class G felony is punishable by a fine of up to \$25,000 or prison for up to 10 years, or both.

Police canines are an integral part of any law enforcement team, and like other police officers, they risk their lives in the line of duty. By increasing the penalty for those who hurt or kill a police dog, it demonstrates to those who would do this act, that their criminal actions against a police canine, should, and will, have serious repercussions.

The Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association constantly look at ways to help ensure that our communities are safe. Police canines are a very valuable resource to achieve this goal.

The Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association supports this legislation and asks that the committee move forward on this legislation.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this legislation.