



**REPORT ON LEGISLATION BY THE ANIMAL LAW COMMITTEE
AND MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**A.2496
S.5720**

**M. of A. Santabarbara
Sen. Brooks**

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to establishing March thirteenth as a day of commemoration to be known as “K9 Veterans Day.”

THIS LEGISLATION IS APPROVED

I. SUMMARY OF THE LEGISLATION

Under the proposed bill, the State of New York would designate March 13 of each year as “K9 Veterans Day.” The bill seeks to honor the work and sacrifice of canines that have served in the United States military and in other capacities.¹

II. BACKGROUND

Joseph White, a former military dog trainer, pioneered the national effort to recognize March 13 as K9 Veterans Day.² The date marks the creation of the U.S. Army’s canine unit, the “K9 Corps,” on March 13, 1942.³ The unit was formed during World War II, following the attack on Pearl Harbor.⁴ By the end of the war, approximately 10,000 dogs had been trained to assist with the war effort in various capacities, including in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.⁵ Dogs also were used extensively in the Vietnam War, where approximately 4,000 dogs and 10,000

¹ See A.02496, Sponsor’s Memo, https://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&leg_video=&bn=A02496&term=2021&Summary=Y&Memo=Y&Text=Y. (All online sources cited in this report were last visited on February 9, 2021.)

² Rhonda Carpenter, *This Day Goes to the Dogs – K-9 Veterans Day*, Defense Media Network (Mar. 13, 2019), <http://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/this-day-goes-to-the-dogs/>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Sarah D. Cruse, *Military Working Dogs: Classification and Treatment in the U.S. Armed Forces*, 21 Animal L. 249, 254 (2015), <https://law.lclark.edu/live/files/23698-21-cruse.pdf>.

⁵ *Id.* at 255.

About the Association

The mission of the New York City Bar Association, which was founded in 1870 and has 25,000 members, is to equip and mobilize a diverse legal profession to practice with excellence, promote reform of the law, and uphold the rule of law and access to justice in support of a fair society and the public interest in our community, our nation, and throughout the world.

human handlers were employed.⁶ During the Vietnam War alone, military dogs and their handlers are credited with saving more than 10,000 lives.⁷

Dogs continue to be used in military engagements. At the high point of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States had approximately 2,500 canines in the field.⁸ Many of these dogs had the dangerous task of using their sense of smell to identify improvised explosive devices, risking — and at times, losing — their lives for their human counterparts.⁹

In addition to military service, canines such as customs dogs, search and rescue dogs, border patrol dogs, police dogs, and Secret Service dogs protect our country in other ways. On K9 Veterans Day, New York would recognize all such canine groups.¹⁰

III. JUSTIFICATION

Veterans Day is celebrated each year as a national holiday to “honor America’s veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.”¹¹ The K9 Veterans Day movement seeks similar honor and recognition for America’s canine heroes. Designating a specific date for these dogs raises public awareness about the dogs’ unique sacrifice and dedication and presents an opportunity for events and activities honoring the animals.

Paying special recognition to canine veterans is also meaningful to their human handlers. These individuals train the dogs and work with them in the field, resulting in a unique bond between human and dog. Celebrating K9 Veterans Day would bring attention to the contributions of these handlers too, while offering a designated opportunity for handlers to honor their canine companions.¹²

⁶ *Id.* at 257-58.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Michael Paterniti, *The Dogs of War*, Nat’l Geographic (Jun. 2014), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2014/06/dogs-war-soldiers-military-afghanistan/>.

⁹ *Id.*; see also Lisa Rogak, *Dogs of War: Photos Remembering the Military’s Canine Heroes*, Huffington Post (Jul. 27, 2012), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/28/military-dogs-war-memorial-day_n_1545926.html.

¹⁰ Sponsor’s Memo, note 1 above.

¹¹ U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, *History of Veterans Day*, <http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetdayhistory.asp>.

¹² See Paterniti, note 8 above; Rogak, note 9 above.

By passing this bill, New York would join a growing national effort to recognize K9 Veterans Day. Kentucky,¹³ Michigan,¹⁴ New Hampshire,¹⁵ New Jersey,¹⁶ Tennessee,¹⁷ Virginia,¹⁸ and Wisconsin¹⁹ have all passed laws recognizing the holiday, while Utah²⁰ has considered a similar bill.

Moreover, designating a K9 Veterans Day comports with New York's existing statutory scheme, which recognizes many dates in honor of those who have served our country, among them Gulf War Veterans' Day (February 28), Vietnam Veterans' Day (March 29), POW Recognition Day (April 9), Women Veterans Recognition Day (June 12), and Korean War Veterans' Day (June 25).²¹

IV. CONCLUSION

Because of the valuable service that canine veterans have provided our country and the growing national effort to recognize their dedication, the New York City Bar Association Animal Law Committee and Military and Veterans Affairs Committee support this proposed bill.

Animal Law Committee
Christopher Wlach, Chair

Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Christopher Amore, Chair

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Contact

Elizabeth Kocienda, Director of Advocacy | 212.382.4788 | ekocienda@nycbar.org
Mary Margulis-Ohnuma, Policy Counsel | 212.382.6767 | mmargulis-ohnuma@nycbar.org

¹³ Ky. Senate Res. 232 (2014) ("A resolution honoring the dogs who have served in the Armed Forces and declaring March 13, 2014, as K-9 Veterans Day."), <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/14RS/sr232/bill.doc>.

¹⁴ Mich. Gov. Rick Snyder, Proclamation: K-9 Veterans' Day (Mar. 13, 2013), <http://www.mwdm.org/K-9%20Veterans%27%20Day2013.pdf>.

¹⁵ N.H. Rev. Stat. § 4:13-s.

¹⁶ N.J. Rev Stat § 36:2-173.

¹⁷ Tenn. H.R. 42 (2013) ("A resolution to honor the service and sacrifice of our canine veterans."), <https://legiscan.com/TN/text/HR0042/id/759814/Tennessee-2013-HR0042-Draft.pdf>.

¹⁸ Va. H.J.R. 552 (2013) (resolution "[d]esignating March 13, in 2013 and in each succeeding year, as K-9 Veterans Day in Virginia"), <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?131+ful+HJ552ER+pdf>.

¹⁹ Wis. Assembly Joint Resolution 4 (2015), <http://www.kcfadogs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ajr4-3.17.15.pdf>.

²⁰ Utah H.J.R. 4 (2020), <https://le.utah.gov/~2020/bills/hbillint/HJR004.pdf>.

²¹ N.Y. Exec. Law § 168-a.