



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George D. Maziarz

Legislature approves bill to increase penalties for killing a police dog or horse

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The New York State Senate and Assembly passed legislation yesterday that increases penalties for killing a police dog or police horse while on the line of duty. The bill (S1079A) (A2596A), sponsored by Senator George D. Maziarz (R-C, Newfane) and Assemblyman Kenneth Zebrowski (D-New City), helps recognize the important roles these animals have in crime solving, rescue and recovery operations and other duties by creating a felony-level offense.

“Police animals do a remarkable job protecting and serving the citizens of this state,” said Senator Maziarz. “In 2011, the Niagara County Sheriff's Office lost their K-9, Rocky, when he fell off a roof tracking clues regarding a robbery. The use of police animals is increasing and they continually undertake tasks that our own police officers do. It is time that we provide these animals the protection they deserve under the law when they are injured or die in the line of duty.”

In addition to the loss of Rocky, another high-profile death of a police animal came in March 2013 when Ape, a newly-trained FBI dog, was fatally shot as police searched for Kurt Myers – a suspect in the deaths of four people in Herkimer, Herkimer County.

“The role of police animals has significantly expanded over the past few years leading to increased use in investigations and apprehensions,” stated Assemblyman Zebrowski. “These animals provide protection, assistance and improve public safety. State and local police invest a great deal of time and resources in the training of these extraordinary animals. These animals are viewed and respected as ordinary police officers and we should begin to reflect that by increasing the penalty for killing them.”

State and local law enforcement agencies increasingly rely on these animals in crime solving, rescue and recovery operations. Under current law, killing a police animal is a Class A misdemeanor. The legislation passed by both houses yesterday would make such an action a class E felony, punishable by up to 4 years in prison, the highest penalty for killing an animal in the state.

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