

Madam Chair and Members of the House Rules Committee,

It is my understanding that your Committee will be hearing HCR 16 this Thursday and that the purpose of this legislation would be to make any "Rescued Shelter Dog" the Official Dog of the State of Oregon. Since I passed similar legislation in 2015-2016 which is now in the Official Code of Georgia, I was asked by some of your fellow Oregonians to share with you the positive impact "The Adoptable Dog Act" has had in Georgia. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to do so, and, despite my 16 years of service in the Georgia House of Representatives, will do my best to be brief. As many of you know, that is easier said than done except depending on the mood of the Speaker or a Committee Chair.

Like every other state, Georgia has so many "official" designations from the state bird to the state rock to the state insect, etc. An attempt was made about 25 years ago to make the Golden Lab the "Official Dog of Georgia." And who has not met a Lab he or she did not like? The debate rolled on to include the English Bulldog which is the mascot of my college, The University of Georgia, and then was finally tabled and then back to the Lab and defeated.

Allow me to try and be brief here, (I really am trying, Madam Chair.) the Colony of Georgia was founded to give people a "second chance at life." There was still no "official dog" as I began my last term in the House and I love all animals and saw an opening to promote giving animals "a second chance at life" and enriching the lives of Georgians by bringing animals into their homes.

My political enemies (having chaired the House Ethics Committee for 12 years, I seemed to have made a few) said my proposal was "frivolous legislation" until I pointed out that Georgia cities and counties take in approximately 550,000 homeless animals a year and that it costs local governments \$15 to \$40 a day per animal to house them. We are talking a boat load of taxpayer money.

The financial angle worked and was reinforced by the fact a fiscal note was not required since I was only making a simple change in Georgia Code.

The "closer" was being able to note that the designation that "any dog that needed a home" could be The Official Dog of Georgia and that 40% of dogs awaiting rescue in Georgia were pedigrees. That covered Labs and everything else imaginable. My guess is the same would be true in Oregon.

From what I understand from local governments across our state, "The Adoptable Dog Act" has resulted in thousands upon thousand of additional animals (dogs and cats) being rescued and approximately \$2 million dollars of taxpayer money being saved over the past two years. And just imagine the joy those animals have brought to the citizens of Georgia who rescued them.

Madam Chair, and members of the Committee, once again I am grateful for the opportunity to share with you my thoughts on the legislation before you. And my former colleagues will tell you, this is as brief as I have ever been when discussing pending legislation. They wish they had been so lucky.

If you have any questions or need further information, I can be reached at 404-210-9587 or at joebwilkinson@cs.com.

Very Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph B. Wilkinson, Jr.
Member of the Georgia House of Representatives 2001-2017