

SB 696 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Judiciary

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/22, 3/6

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates General Fund moneys for a statewide animal abuse and neglect prosecutor in the Oregon Department of Justice.

REVENUE: Revenue impact issued

FISCAL: Fiscal impact issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Expertise required for animal abuse and neglect investigations and prosecutions
- Pretrial forfeiture statute for animal-cruelty cases
- Department of Justice would provide additional logistical support
- Future funding from non-profit organization is uncertain
- Correlation between animal abuse and crimes against persons

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Humane special agents are peace officers commissioned by the Superintendent of the Oregon State Police, at the request of a humane investigation agency. They are vested with authority to investigate and enforce animal welfare laws, including prohibitions on animal abuse and neglect. The special agents are employees of the humane investigation agencies, who are responsible for the agents' salaries.

There is one prosecutor in Oregon dedicated to animal abuse and neglect cases, based out of Benton County but providing assistance throughout the state. That position is currently funded by a grant from the Animal Legal Defense Fund, awarded in three-year cycles.

Senate Bill 696 would fund a statewide animal-cruelty focused attorney within the Department of Justice.