

**MINUTES OF THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND HOMELAND SECURITY**

**Seventy-fourth Session  
February 22, 2007**

The Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security was called to order by Vice Chair Joseph J. Heck at 3:27 p.m. on Thursday, February 22, 2007, in Room 2149 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Room 4412E, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator Joseph J. Heck, Vice Chair  
Senator Mark E. Amodei  
Senator Maggie Carlton  
Senator John J. Lee  
Senator Joyce Woodhouse

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Senator Dennis Nolan (Excused)  
Senator Maurice E. Washington (Excused)

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

Senator Dina Titus, Clark County Senatorial District No. 7

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Carolyn Allfree, Committee Secretary  
Donna Esposito, Committee Manager  
Jason Funk, Intern to Senator Heck  
Elana Graham, Assistant to Committee Manager  
Wes Henderson, Intern to Senator Nolan  
Dan Lindholm, Intern to Senator Nolan  
Annette Magnus, Executive Assistant to Senator Titus  
Nicholas Marquart, Intern to Senator Nolan  
Matthew Prichard, Intern to Senator Carlton

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Matt Szudajski, Committee Policy Analyst  
Lynette M. Johnson, Committee Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Seth Floyd, City of Las Vegas  
Diane Blankenburg, Director of Community Programs, Nevada Humane Society  
Jeffery Engle, Chief Investigator, Nevada Humane Society  
Karen Layne, President, Las Vegas Valley Humane Society  
Susan Krisko, President, Nevada Voters for Animals  
John Slaughter, Management Services Director, Washoe County  
Frank Siracusa, Chief, Division of Emergency Management, Department of Public Safety  
Mitch Schneider, Lieutenant, Field Supervisor, Regional Animal Services, Washoe County  
Doug Duke, Nevada Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
Kathleen Delaney, President, Las Vegas Basset Rescue  
Jennifer Palombi, President, Nevada Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

VICE CHAIR HECK:

We will open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 81.

**SENATE BILL 81**: Requires state and local plans for emergency management to address the needs of persons with pets or service animals. (BDR 36-176)

SENATOR DINA TITUS (Clark County Senatorial District No. 7):

I am here for S.B. 81, which is about saving our pets during an emergency or disaster. According to Dr. Leslie Irvine, a sociologist with the University of Colorado, most pet owners refer to them as family members, nearly gaining the status of children.

A recent Zogby International, Incorporated Poll (Zogby Poll) reported that 61 percent of pet owners said they would not evacuate a disaster area if they had to leave their pets behind. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) estimates that natural or technological disasters affect two to three million Americans every year, and an incident that affects humans will affect animals. The statistics are staggering. For example, animal welfare organizations cared for approximately 10,000 companion animals affected by

Hurricane Katrina. Over 3 million animals died in Hurricane Floyd, 30,000 cattle died in the Colorado blizzard, and in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, over 1,000 healthy dogs and cats were euthanized merely due to lack of kennel space. Fortunately, this issue has gained recognition and emergency response agencies have begun to include animals in their disaster response plans. In October 2006, Congress passed HR 3858 known as the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS Act) see [Exhibit C](#). This legislation requires the inclusion of companion animals in disaster planning at the state and local levels and authorizes FEMA to assist with these disaster plans for pets and service animals. The PETS Act also allocates grant funding for states involved in developing such plans.

Disaster can strike at any time and any place. Passage of this bill will help ensure that no pet will be left behind.

VICE CHAIR HECK:

Thank you for sponsoring this bill. It is an important issue brought to the forefront after Hurricane Katrina.

SETH FLOYD (City of Las Vegas):

We support S.B. 81. Las Vegas has provisions for people with pets and service animals in our emergency management plan.

DIANE BLANKENBURG (Director of Community Programs, Nevada Humane Society):  
I support S.B. 81. After Hurricane Katrina, I went to New Orleans where I managed a cat rescue program. I also worked with local animal rescue groups helping them to get reorganized. I witnessed the confusion and emotional toll people went through in being separated from their animals. My hope is that these plans address contingencies should resources, such as phones, become scarce.

SENATOR LEE:

How were other animals, such as birds, managed?

MS. BLANKENBURG:

Unfortunately, the situation was reactive. There was a facility, in Gonzales, Louisiana, managed by the Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and the Humane Society of the United States.

JEFFREY ENGLE (Chief Investigator, Nevada Humane Society):

I support S.B. 81. This bill will help organize the different resources throughout the State.

KAREN LAYNE (President, Las Vegas Valley Humane Society):

I support S.B. 81. Our agency was involved in reuniting Hurricane Katrina victims with their pets. Also keep in mind that disasters occur in southern Nevada, such as the Virgin River flooding; therefore, it is important to have animal rescue plans.

SUSAN KRISKO (President, Nevada Voters for Animals):

Las Vegas is growing at such a rate that we need to ensure that organizations work together during an emergency. I support S.B. 81.

JOHN SLAUGHTER (Management Services Director, Washoe County):

We support S.B. 81. The Nevada Commission on Homeland Security has funded an evacuation planning process for the entire State. It is my understanding that this process will include discussions and plans addressing pet assistance during an emergency.

SENATOR CARLTON:

In the statewide plan, is coordination going to be addressed?

MR. SLAUGHTER:

I would like Frank Siracusa to address your question.

FRANK SIRACUSA (Chief, Division of Emergency Management, Department of Public Safety):

A project identified in our Homeland Security Grant Application was mass-evacuation sheltering. A portion of that mass-evacuation sheltering was to identify the needs of livestock, pets and pet owners. Our plan clearly delineates and identifies the process. We also help local emergency management agencies develop and enhance their emergency plans. In addition, we have developed contingencies in our statewide emergency management plan.

MITCH SCHNEIDER (Lieutenant, Field Supervisor, Regional Animal Services, Washoe County):

I support S.B. 81. I want to mention an upcoming bill that will lower the cost of microchipping animals. I hope you will support that bill also.

DOUG DUKE (Nevada Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals):

The Nevada SPCA supports and is encouraged by S.B. 81. We participated in rescues after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These dogs fended for themselves for about four weeks before being rescued. Only one of the dogs was microchipped so I was encouraged to hear about the microchipping bill.

KATHLEEN DELANEY (President, Las Vegas Basset Rescue):

We support S.B. 81. As a local rescue organization that offers rescue services statewide, we see firsthand how important pets are to their owners. We also want to express our support of this necessary first step. I want to add some important information. Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, a Zogby Poll indicated that 49 percent of the people polled said they would not have left the disaster area if their pets could not accompany them. Several weeks after Hurricane Katrina, that number climbed to 61 percent as people continued to experience the disaster.

JENNIFER PALOMBI (President, Nevada Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals):

I would like to congratulate Senator Townsend and Senator Titus for bringing this bill forward. It is needed and I support S.B. 81. I know all rescue groups will gladly work with any agency to facilitate the process. Our facility in southern Nevada is large and we could take animals. There needs to be a central location where all animals are taken so that people know where to go.

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VICE CHAIR HECK:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 81. There being no further comments or business, this meeting of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security is adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Lynette M. Johnson,  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Senator Joseph J. Heck, Vice Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_