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March 11, 2003

Nevada State Senate  
Re: SB 321  
Amendment to NRS 426 Statutes

To the Honorable Senators and esteemed guests:

My name is Bill Schley. I am a resident of Sparks, Nevada. I am totally blind and use a guide dog. I am also a BEN Blind Vendor and professional journalist.

My guide dog, Benny, like all service dogs, is truly important to my independent mobility and safety. Ben is also a dear and close friend, and I cannot adequately express how much I depend upon him and his service to me.

The proposal before the State Senate would amend the current service dog statutes to make a first offense pet dog's attack, whether through neglect or through direct action of its owner, a misdemeanor accompanied by both fines and punitive remuneration to the service dog's owner. This proposed amendment would also make allowing a dog to attack or kill any service dog a misdemeanor on a first offense. I support the amending of this law to make a second offense of this type a class C felony.

Those of us who live with handicaps and use canines to aid our existences are entirely without recourse if our dogs are attacked while on duty. Most handicaps, and especially blindness, preclude the effective use of repellent weaponry. I am personally familiar with a California woman who underwent the fearful experience of hearing her guide dog attacked by a neighbor's pet. She could only drop the harness handle, leaving herself completely helpless, and listen as her dog defended himself. Twenty years afterward the trauma she experienced affects her work with her current dog to this day. Mrs. Mary Yoshisato of Carson City, Nevada has similarly witnessed her yellow Lab, Decker, attacked by unrestrained stray dogs on several occasions with no provocation on the part of her or Decker.

We are asking that the bill draft be considered and amended into the NRS statutes. People who allow their pet dogs to run off a leash or without supervision are already breaking the law. The serviced dog users of the Silver State should be protected from their negligence. This bill will not only supplement civil government by the execution of fines, but will set legal standards for the oversight of canines throughout Nevada.

I live in the north part of Sparks, also known as Spanish Springs. Many dogs run loose in our neighborhood because residents believe they are living "out in the country." These negligent dog owners do not realize that their pet dogs run with other loose canines during the day and form packs that can endanger other pets, property, and even people. Disabled Americans like me and dogs like Benny need to have legal recourse should one of these negligent owners' dogs attack us. I also own two pet dogs that are always restrained on our property and never allowed to run loose.

The Nevada Revised Statutes Provide just recompense for anyone injured during a mugging. If the victim is psychologically impaired by the trauma it is covered. If they lose time from work that is also covered. The service dogs that help increase the quality of life for disabled Americans deserve no less.

I do not support the section of this proposal that would adjudicate police dogs as service animals. Police dogs are already seen as police officers under Nevada law, and thus do not need the coverage proposed in this amendment, nor does the State require additional legislation to protect them.

Thank you for your time and your kind consideration.

William F. Schley

Sparks, Nevada

March 11, 2003