

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: April 19, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso  for
Chief Legislative Analyst Council File No: 21-0002-S74
Assignment No: 21-04-0278

SUBJECT: Support for Legislation and/or Any Administrative Action to Prohibit Cruel Experimentation on Domestic Cats by U.S Department of Veterans Affairs

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached revised Resolution to include in the City's 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for legislation and/or administrative action that would prohibit cruel experimentation on domestic cats by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

SUMMARY

On March 17, 2021, the Resolution (Koretz – Blumenfield – O'Farrell) was introduced in support of HR 8867 (Titus – Mast), the Cat Abuse in Testing Stops (CATS) Act, to prohibit cruel experimentation on domestic cats by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Resolution states that the VA has a history of conducting medical experimentation on domesticated animals, including cats. The proposed bill sought to prohibit the VA from purchasing, breeding, transporting, housing, feeding, maintaining, disposing of, or experimenting on cats as part of the conduct of any study that causes significant pain or distress. However, the proposed bill was introduced during the previous Congressional Legislative Session and did not move forward as no action was taken.

Therefore, the revised Resolution recommends support for legislation and/or administrative action to prohibit cruel experimentation on domestic cats by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a history of conducting medical experiments on domesticated animals, including cats. In 2020, the VA admitted having spent nearly five million dollars in taxpayer money on cat testing at the West L.A. VA laboratory. In the same year, a group published evidence that included photos and videos of kittens and cats undergoing painful and invasive experiments in VA laboratories in Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Louisville. The VA has previously claimed that the experiments benefit veterans because sleep disorders are associated with many of the consequences of combat experience, including post-traumatic stress disorder. However, according to medical experts, studies conducted on a cat's brain can't be replicated in the human brain.

On December 3, 2020, HR 8867 (Titus – Mast), also known as the Cat Abuse in Testing Stops (CATS) Act, was introduced with the support of 19 House co-sponsors. The bill sought to permanently end painful and unnecessary taxpayer-funded experiments on cats conducted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. To accomplish this, the bill proposed prohibiting the VA from purchasing, breeding, transporting, housing, feeding, maintaining, disposing of, or experimenting on cats as part of any study that causes significant pain or distress. The CATS Act was intended to build on other efforts to stop unnecessary and harmful animal testing at the VA.

DEPARTMENTS NOTIFIED

Department of Animal Services



Xochitl Ramirez
Analyst

SMT:xr

Attachment: 1. Revised Resolution

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to, or pending before, a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a history of doing medical experimentation on domesticated animals, including cats; and

WHEREAS, these are healthy cats who are purchased from commercial breeders by the VA with tax dollars, brought into a laboratory, locked in a tiny cage, mutilated, tortured, injected with chemicals, asphyxiated and then are killed and dissected; and

WHEREAS, photographs recently seen in the media show cats hooked up to electronic monitors, implanted with electrodes and eventually euthanized in the name of science; and

WHEREAS, the VA was called on last year by Congress to explain the experiments and admitted that it has spent nearly \$5 million in taxpayer money on testing at the West L.A. VA laboratory alone; and

WHEREAS, the VA claims that the experiments benefit veterans because sleep disorders are associated with many of the consequences of combat experience, including post-traumatic stress disorder; and

WHEREAS, critics allege that, according to medical experts, studies that are done on a cat's brain cannot be replicated on a human brain; and

WHEREAS, during the 2019-2020 Congressional Legislative Session, HR 8867 (Titus – Mast), also known as the Cat Abuse in Testing Stops (CATS) Act, proposed prohibiting the Department of Veterans Affairs from carrying out research within the Veterans Health Administration, including from purchasing, breeding, transporting, housing, feeding, maintaining, disposing of, or experimenting on cats as part of the conduct of any study that causes significant pain or distress;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for legislation and/or administrative action that would prohibit cruel experimentation on domestic cats by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.