



GOVERNOR OF MISSOURI

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TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Herewith I return to you Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 566, entitled:

AN ACT

To amend chapter 322, RSMo, by adding thereto one new section relating to vaccination of dogs and cats against rabies.

I disapprove of Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 566. My reasons for disapproval are as follows:

Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 566 would introduce confusion and conflict into the process by which rabies is detected and treated, a process which is already provided for in Missouri law and which effectively protects Missourians who may have been exposed to rabies.

Rabies is an invariably fatal disease for humans unless timely treatment is administered. A clear, quick, and comprehensive detection process, which includes testing of suspect animals, is therefore critical. Missouri has such a process. Section 322.140, RSMo, sets forth a multidisciplinary approach in which the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services has the authority, in consultation with veterinarians, local law enforcement, health officials, and health care providers, to confiscate a suspect animal and order testing or other measures deemed appropriate. The scientifically-accepted method for definitively confirming rabies in an animal requires examining brain segments, a process that necessitates the death of the suspect animal. Under current law, public health veterinarians and communicable disease epidemiologists at the Department discuss each case with local health officials, veterinarians, and the medical doctors treating people who may have been exposed to rabies. This multidisciplinary approach properly takes into account both the health of the patient and the condition of the animal. The approach also adequately protects public health.

Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 566, by contrast, creates an ambiguous, competing process for detecting and treating rabies, one that does not supplant what is already provided for in law. By itself, this new and unnecessary process is inadequate to protect the public. Paired with the already existing process, the new provisions will create unwarranted – and most certainly unintended – consequences for Missourians who may become exposed to rabies.

