
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5566

AN ACT CONCERNING ACCELERATED REHABILITATION IN THE CASE OF ANIMAL CRUELTY.

SUMMARY

This bill generally prohibits people charged with certain animal cruelty crimes from participating in the pretrial diversionary program, accelerated rehabilitation (AR) (see BACKGROUND) if they have already participated in the program. The bill makes an exception if it is at least 15 years since the prior charges were dismissed under the program. Existing law already limits defendants to using the program once, unless, among other things, at least 10 years have passed since the prior charges were dismissed under the program. Therefore, violators of second or subsequent animal cruelty crimes are already generally ineligible for the program.

The bill applies to the primary animal cruelty crimes which are primarily C and D felonies: cruelty to animals, malicious or intentional cruelty to animals, engaging in exhibition of animal fighting, and intentionally injuring or killing police animals or dogs in volunteer canine service and rescue teams. It also applies to the crime of interfering with or obstructing or resisting an animal control officer or law enforcement officer in carrying out their duty to prevent animal cruelty, which is a class D misdemeanor. Existing law prohibits people charged with a class A felony, most class B felonies, class C felonies (unless good cause is shown), and certain other crimes from participating in AR.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

ELEMENTS OF ANIMAL CRUELTY CRIMES INELIGIBLE FOR AR

Under the bill, an individual is generally ineligible for AR if he or she:

1. maliciously and intentionally maims, mutilates, tortures,

- wounds, or kills an animal;
2. knowingly (a) owns, possesses, keeps, or trains an animal engaged in a fighting exhibition for amusement or gain; (b) possesses, keeps, or trains an animal to engage in such an exhibition; (c) permits such an exhibition to take place on premises under his or her control; (d) acts as a judge or spectator for such an exhibition; or (e) bets or wagers on the outcome of such an exhibition; or
 3. intentionally injures (a) an animal while the animal is performing its duties under a peace officer's supervision or (b) a dog that is a member of a volunteer canine search and rescue team while the dog is performing its duties under an active team member's supervision.

BACKGROUND

Accelerated Rehabilitation

AR is a pretrial diversionary program that allows certain criminal defendants charged with certain crimes or motor vehicle violations to avoid prosecution and incarceration by successfully completing a court-sanctioned, community-based treatment program. Defendants who successfully complete the program have their charges dismissed (CGS § 54-56e).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 41 Nay 0 (03/30/2026)