

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4159

To develop best practice guidelines for the use of dogs in Federal courts,
and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 24, 2021

Ms. SCANLON (for herself and Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS) introduced the following
bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To develop best practice guidelines for the use of dogs in
Federal courts, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Courtroom Dogs Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF**
6 **DOGS IN FEDERAL COURTS.**

7 (a) DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED TRAINING ORGANI-
8 ZATION.—In this section, the term “qualified training or-
9 ganization” means an organization that—

1 (1) meets the requirements of section 501(c)(3)
2 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;

3 (2) is exempt from taxation under section
4 501(a) of such Code; and

5 (3) includes staff members with knowledge
6 about—

7 (A) the criminal justice system; and

8 (B) the breeding, training, and placement
9 of facility dog teams that have graduated from
10 a qualified assistance dog organization.

11 (b) BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES.—Not later than
12 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the
13 Attorney General shall develop and publish best practices
14 for the use of dogs to provide support for defendants, com-
15 plainants, and witnesses in Federal courtrooms and grand
16 jury rooms, which shall include guidelines for—

17 (1) avoiding prejudice;

18 (2) addressing whether and when dog handlers
19 should be required, and what training, credentials,
20 or experience should be required;

21 (3) stating what experience, training, or certifi-
22 cation should be required for the dogs;

23 (4) addressing liability concerns; and

1 (5) ensuring the dog or handler will not unduly
2 interfere with the management of the case or any
3 other court operations.

4 (c) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out subsection (b),
5 the Attorney General may consult with the judiciary
6 branch, Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies
7 and prosecutors, defense-side professionals, and experts in
8 the field, including a qualified training organization.

9 (d) GUIDELINES.—Not later than 60 days after the
10 date on which the best practice guidelines required under
11 subsection (b) are published, the Attorney General shall
12 issue guidance informing all United States attorneys of
13 the best practice guidelines and recommending the imple-
14 mentation of the guidelines.

15 (e) RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sec-
16 tion shall be construed to prevent a court of the United
17 States from—

18 (1) providing any other accommodation to a
19 witness or other person in accordance with applica-
20 ble law; or

21 (2) retaining control of the courtroom.

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