

Senate Judiciary, Law Enforcement, and Criminal Justice Committee
02/17/2026

Bill: SB 259 - Evidence Declaration Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Weiler

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill requires a signed statement regarding evidence collected in a criminal case.

Discussion:

Yeas:

Nays:

N/V:

Outcome: SB 259 was not heard in the Committee today.

Bill: 1st substitute HB 87 - Animal Crime Victim Amendments

Sponsor: Representative Mauga

Floor Sponsor: Senator Plumb

UASD Position: Support

This Bill modifies provisions related to the release and forfeiture of an animal that is being held because of abuse or involvement in a crime.

Discussion: The Bill establishes a process allowing, while the legal resolution of a criminal case is ongoing, for the release or transfer of an animal that has been lawfully impounded and is being held in a shelter due to alleged abuse or involvement in criminal activity. It permits certain government officials, under specified conditions, to enter a premises or vehicle to aid or take custody of an animal that is being criminally mistreated or is associated with a crime, and requires notice to the animal's owner or possessor. The Bill authorizes a shelter or government counsel to file a motion requesting that a court determine whether the animal should be forfeited or transferred to alternative care pending resolution of the case. It outlines procedures for a hearing, allows the owner to be heard, provides standards for the court's determination, and establishes procedures for placement of the animal if ownership is forfeited. The Bill also permits a court to order an owner to pay costs associated with sheltering the animal and to require an individual convicted of animal abuse or criminal activity involving an animal to complete an educational or animal cruelty prevention program. The sponsor clarified that the Bill does not expand seizure authority, regulate breeders or pet ownership, or affect lawful agricultural practices.

During discussion, Senator Brammer raised concerns about a provision prohibiting the court from transferring ownership of an animal to an individual residing with the original owner, questioning whether it limits judicial discretion. The sponsor responded that, unlike some child welfare proceedings, the Bill requires a formal court hearing before forfeiture occurs. Senator

Brammer also sought clarification regarding the meaning of an animal being “involved in a crime,” and the sponsor explained that the provision applies when the animal is the victim of abuse or cruelty, not when the animal merely plays a role in another crime.

The District Attorney’s Office and members of the public spoke in support of the Bill, along with representatives from Salt Lake County Animal Services, Animal Care of Davis County, the Salt Lake County Council, and the Utah Animal Control Officers Association.

Yeas: 3

Nays: 2

N/V: 4

Outcome: 1st substitute HB 87 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.