



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2436		DATE: 1/20/2026	
COMMITTEE: Agriculture			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVO		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 11:56 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: BARB YORK		PHONE NUMBER: 417-448-9484	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ANIMAL HUSBANDRY ASSOCIATION		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 554			
CITY: ELDON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65026
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: KAREN STRANGE		PHONE NUMBER: 573-480-2389	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI FEDERATION OF ANIMAL OWNERS		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 554			
CITY: ELDON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65026
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: MARK FIEGENBAUM		PHONE NUMBER: 573-690-8580
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI FARM BUREAU		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: MO
EMAIL:		ZIP:
ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: SHANNON COOPER		PHONE NUMBER: 660-890-1432
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI CATTLEMEN's ASC		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 208 MADISON		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: TONY DUGGER		PHONE NUMBER: 417-259-1915	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI PET BREEDERS ASSOC		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 630 W. MAIN			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: BOB BAKER		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ALLIANCE FOR ANIMAL LEGISLATION		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 4309			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63123
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CLAIRE WYATT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 11:53 AM	

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This proposed bill unnecessarily modifies and dangerously weakens Missouri's disposition statute and procedure. If passed and enacted, it will burden law enforcement, impede the lawful and vital work of animal control officers (as public health officials), and jeopardize public safety. As a resident of the State of Missouri, I am concerned.

From nearly four years, until July of 2025, I prosecuted animal abuse crimes and violent crimes for nearly four years as an Assistant Prosecutor in Jackson County, MO. In that role, I conducted a disposition hearing in early 2025 after charging a defendant with involuntary manslaughter and assault in the second degree related to a fatal dog mauling involving several dogs in South Kansas City in late 2024. I cannot write much about the case, as it is still pending, but as public court records would indicate, the defendant was still in possession of one of the dogs - not believed to be involved in the fatal mauling - at the time he was arrested for a violent offense involving his other dogs (who were likely descendants from the remaining dog). It was clear from the evidence, and from numerous observations from both neighbors and animal control, that the defendant was not only unable to properly care for the dog but that allowing him to do so would seriously jeopardize public safety. Had the State not won the disposition hearing, the dog would have remained either chained up on the porch of a condemned property while the defendant was in custody, or back in the defendant's care - or lack thereof.

Under the current statute, animal control officers (or public health officials) are permitted to remove and hold animals based on a probable cause finding and hold them for disposition if sufficient facts exist. The statutory procedure already strongly contemplates and incorporates due process. The warrant to enter a property and seize an animal requires a probable cause finding by both an animal control officer and a Missouri Court with jurisdiction over the case; notice of the hearing date must be posted when the animal is seized, the defendant is then entitled to a hearing before the Court within 30 days, and the plaintiff (government) must prove through evidence that the animals are victims of neglect or abuse under applicable law.

To apply this to practice: in the fatal mauling case, after animal control posted proper notice – as required by statute, I (for the State) still had to conduct a full hearing and present evidence and argument to the Court at the disposition hearing in my case, despite the defendant failing to appear at the hearing, as default judgment/forfeiture is not an option under current law, as it is with most civil claims.

The disposition statute and process as it presently exists is more than adequate in balancing the

animal owner's right to their "property" with the compelling government interest in preserving evidence and assuring public safety. In fact, the current process is arguably more deferential to defendants/suspects than most other seizures under Missouri law. For example, there are little to no due process considerations when police obtain a search and seizure warrant from a judge for any other type of property. If a judge finds probable cause from a search warrant application, the police officer may enter a private property and seize any evidence regardless of its value, provided that the judge has found that it may be evidence of a crime. I have seen search warrants in some Missouri jurisdictions authorizing "every electronic device in the house" and very few, if any, mechanisms to challenge that seizure while the case is pending investigation and subject to the statute of limitations (which in some cases in Missouri are timeless).

Police can even seize items the uncharged suspect is constitutionally entitled to possess, such as a firearm. If investigators believe a firearm, otherwise legally owned by a suspect, has been used in the commission of an offense, it may be seized without notice. If a suspect is charged, a Missouri judge is permitted to (and typically does) order that the defendant not possess nor be in the presence of any firearms or weapons as a bond condition while the case is pending. These actions are all plainly permitted without any type of hearing regarding disposition in Missouri.

Further, the animal victim of alleged abuse or neglect may be valuable evidence themselves, especially given an animal's inability to testify or provide statements. In my experience prosecuting abuse and neglect cases at the state-level, vital evidence (resulting in felony charges) has routinely been missed by police investigators and only recovered, documented, and preserved by local animal control. One such case involved a 15-year-old dachshund who was stabbed and then burned alive on a grill by a man violating an order of protection by wreaking havoc inside his wife's house while his son was present. Due to the photos taken and documentation performed by the animal control officer, the State was able to charge 4 additional felonies (armed criminal action, felony animal abuse, tampering with evidence, harassment) to the additional charge of animal abuse (the lowest level of felony under MO law) and misdemeanor charge of violating an order of protection. Law enforcement on the scene did not preserve the evidence necessary to those charges and instead discarded the evidence – even hauling the grill containing a charred knife and burned cell phone into the trash. This was not because law enforcement was incompetent but because they were primarily concerned with the human element of the investigation, as that is the main function of their job.

Having worked with both animal control officers and police officers from various Missouri jurisdictions as a former prosecutor, I can confidently state that police are not experts in animal behavior or handling; however, animal control officers are. Police are often pulled in several different directions at once by the dynamic elements of their jobs, whereas animal control officers operate within a narrow niche of duties and expertise. If police alone are authorized to impound animals, excluding animal control officers, I believe that animals will be unnecessarily injured, harmed, or even killed during capture/seizure. It will also frustrate law enforcement, who may be forced to choose between responding to a car crash, a fatal shooting, or a dog seizure. Due to current chronic understaffing in most police departments, the possibility of creating an "animal unit" has been met with fierce opposition in my experience.

Finally, while at Jackson County, I studied and presented trainings regarding the correlation between offenders who hurt animals and those who hurt people; the link is staggering. Studies place the overlap with animal abuse and domestic violence at 71-75% overlap; animal abuse and any form of child abuse has been found to have a 60% overlap, which jumps to 88% when the child abuse is physical. When I reviewed Jackson County case data, 19 animal abuse cases were charged between 2020 and 2025 and all but 3 of them had a nexus to violence – often including domestic or sexual violence and child abuse or neglect. This is an 84% correlation and empirically significant, especially given its impact on vulnerable citizens of Missouri and public safety at large.

For all the reasons stated above, I am firmly opposed to the passage of HB2436 regarding the impoundment of animals, and I have faith that Committee Members will consider the harm it will cause to both their constituents and the State of Missouri if enacted.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: CODY ATKINSON		PHONE NUMBER: 573-590-0026	
REPRESENTING: HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS		TITLE:	
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CITY: WASHINGTON		STATE: DC	ZIP: 20037
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: KATE MEGHJI		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: KC PET PROJECT		TITLE: CEO
ADDRESS:		
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO ZIP: 64132
EMAIL: kate.meghji@kcpetproject.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/19/2026 4:10 PM
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 2436. I submit this testimony as the CEO of KC Pet Project, the animal shelter for Kansas City Missouri. KC Pet Project is dedicated to creating a compassionate and safe community for pets and people. We continue to build on our national reputation as an innovative leader in animal welfare with our progressive, lifesaving programs and support services. We work with our local government and law enforcement daily to care for thousands of animals seized in cruelty, neglect, and abandonment cases each year.

While we support clear legal processes and appropriate safeguards for animal owners, House Bill 2436 would significantly undermine the purpose of RSMo. § 578.018 and create serious unintended consequences for animal welfare, public safety, and the effective prosecution of animal cruelty cases. RSMo. § 578.018 was enacted to address a very real and recurring problem: animals seized in cruelty cases languishing for months or years while criminal cases move slowly through the courts. The statute created a defined bond process and timeline to ensure that:

- Animals receive timely, humane care;
- Shelters and local governments are not forced to bear indefinite financial burdens;
- Defendants are required to demonstrate responsibility if they wish to retain ownership rights; and
- Law enforcement can pursue cruelty cases without discouragement from overwhelming holding costs.

House Bill 2436 moves Missouri in the opposite direction.

HB 2436 alters the statutory framework in a way that opens the door for individuals—rather than qualified shelters or impounding authorities—to hold and house animals that are living evidence in criminal cases.

Animals seized in cruelty investigations are not static evidence. They require daily care, veterinary oversight, secure housing, and documentation to preserve their evidentiary value. Allowing individuals to house living evidence:

- Compromises chain of custody and evidentiary integrity;
- Increases the risk of further neglect, injury, or death;
- Creates evidentiary disputes that may jeopardize prosecutions; and
- Places animals back into environments that may be unsafe or unregulated.

This change would make cruelty cases harder—not easier—to prosecute and could result in animals being lost as evidence altogether.

One of the most concerning aspects of HB 2436 is the removal of a defined time period in which an owner or defendant must post bond for seized animals.

The existing statute intentionally includes clear timelines so cases do not stall indefinitely. Removing

these timeframes:

- Leaves animals in legal limbo for an undefined period;
- Forces shelters to provide long-term care with no resolution;
- Encourages delay tactics by defendants; and
- Directly contradicts the legislative intent behind the original enactment of § 578.018.

An indefinite bond process does not protect due process—it defeats it, while shifting all risk and cost to shelters and taxpayers.

HB 2436 mandates additional expenses and requirements on facilities holding seized animals that are unnecessary, duplicative, and financially burdensome.

Most Missouri shelters already meet or exceed professional standards of care. Mandating additional costs will:

- Discourage shelters from accepting animals seized in cruelty cases;
- Reduce cooperation between shelters and law enforcement;
- Increase the likelihood that animals remain in unsafe conditions because no facility can afford to house them; and
- Ultimately weaken enforcement of Missouri’s animal cruelty laws.

Rather than protecting animals, these provisions function as a deterrent to seizure and prosecution.

Taken together, the changes proposed in HB 2436 create a chilling effect on the very partnerships that make animal cruelty enforcement possible.

When shelters face indefinite care obligations, unclear ownership status, evidentiary risk, and unfunded mandates, fewer facilities will be able—or willing—to assist. This leaves law enforcement with fewer options and animals with fewer protections.

Conclusion

Missouri’s current statute strikes a careful balance between the rights of animal owners and the urgent need to protect living beings who cannot advocate for themselves. House Bill 2436 disrupts that balance in a way that harms animals, shelters, and the justice system.

For these reasons, Missouri animal shelters respectfully urge the Committee to oppose House Bill 2436.

Thank you for your time and consideration



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: KATIE BARNETT		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/19/2026 3:32 PM

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Good afternoon. My name is Katie Barnett, I am an attorney licensed to practice law in the state of Missouri. My practice area is animal law, with a majority of cases in disposition of animals seized in animal cruelty cases, as well as special prosecutor for animal cruelty cases. I also represent a handful of animal shelters across the state of Missouri including in Johnson, Saline, and Jackson Counties. I am also an adjunct professor at the University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Law.

My testimony is in opposition to this bill. The current process is effective, efficient, and satisfies Constitutional due process requirements.

The reason for the process outlined in RSMo. 578.018 is simple: living evidence requires a cost of keeping care (food, water, shelter, supplies, and medical care) that other property evidence does not. Without the language in 578.018, your counties would (1. Have to hold the animal for the entirety of the legal process which can take years, and (2. Would bear the entire cost of care for holding those animals and *hope* to recoup it from the animal owner after disposition of the case.

Changing the language of RSMo. 578.018 opens the door for individual to hold and house living evidence, removes the time period in which an animal owner/defendant has to post bond – leaving it indefinite – which the opposite of why this law was originally enacted, and mandates unnecessary expenses for facilities holding animals in an effort to deter seizure and cooperation with law enforcement on animal cruelty cases.

578.018.1(2) (pg.1, ln13-14) The new language allows for animals to be placed in the “care of an approved third party.” The current statutory allows for a veterinarian, animal control authority, or licensed animal shelter ONLY. There are many options for a law enforcement agency to use. The additional "third party" language is concerning because it allows for friends, neighbors, colleagues, and importantly co-conspirators, involved parties, or someone with a shared interest in the animals to care for seized evidence. What other evidence in a criminal investigation is allowed to be held by an individual? Once these animals are seized, they are evidence of a potential crime and should be treated as such. An animal control agency, animal shelter, or veterinarian is overseen by governmental agencies. There are checks and balances to their operations. I do not foresee - even in the most rural communities of Missouri - a need for a third-party citizen to be allowed to care for seized animals. Solution: remove the new third-party language. It risks the investigation and preservation of the animals and is wholly unnecessary.

578.018.2(2) (pg. 2, ln.30-35) The new language removes the amount of bond required. By removing line 33 ("at least thirty days, inclusive of the date on which the animal was taken into custody") it leaves no guidance on how much the reasonable security bond should be. There is no guidance for the law enforcement agency, the clerk where the bond will be posted, or the court. Courts rarely see these cases anyway, so for there to be no guidance and only the words "reasonable" leaves this ripe for challenges. "Reasonable" can certainly remain in the language change, but the time for bond is

necessary for two reasons: (1. It gives a definite time for which the bond covers care, (2. it gives everyone the precise calculation of money required to be posted. The entire purpose for the cost of care language is because without it, animals were historically languishing at animal shelters or vet clinics while cases would drag on and on. This was a drain on needed space at shelters and clinics, there was no recourse or recouping the costs of impoundment from the owner so the animals were held indefinitely and the clinics, animal shelters, and Missouri counties were advancing the costs for months and months without reimbursement in sight. Moreover, without time in which the bond covers care, it does not discuss how the bond expires. The current language reads: "...the authority having custody of the animal may humanely dispose of the animal at the end of the time for which reasonable expenses are covered...". (In 37) If we remove the "time" portion of the current language, then this language is no longer valid. It leaves the agency caring for the animal no understanding or recourse to adopt or transfer the animal at any point in time. It is back to holding animals indefinitely - the entire reason this law was originally enacted. Whether this is intentional or an oversight, this leaves the time period so vague for figuring the cost of care and determining when it expires that it renders the language useless. Solution: the language regarding 30 days must be added back in. Language should also be added that says "renewable" so that the 30 days must be renewed to prevent disposition.

578.018.5 (pg. 3, ln. 60-62) As written this language is confusing at best. If the animal owner is found not liable for costs (not guilty, etc. as listed in the new section 6 below this), then the costs "shall be the responsibility of and shall be borne and paid by the facility or organization that impounded the animal." Making this language "shall," is unnecessary. One of the reasons law enforcement agencies are willing to investigate and impound animals is because they don't have to pay for the indefinite holding of animals while investigations are pending - that's because (1. the current language requires the owner to pay to hold the animals indefinitely, and (2. If the owner does not pay, then the animals can be disposed of after 30 days for adoption transfer or euthanasia, and the law enforcement agency is only liable for the cost of care for the time held (e.g. 30 days, not 3 years while the case is pending). Additionally, this language will lead to confusion as-written. It says the "facility or organization that impounded the animal." Surely that does not mean the veterinary clinic or the nonprofit or municipal animal shelter? They are simply the holding facility. If this is the intent of the language, no veterinary clinic or animal shelter will hold animals seized from animal cruelty cases if they shall bear the cost of care. If anyone is liable for the cost of care if not the owner, it should be the "law enforcement agency" or local government who seized and impounded the animal. Even so, mandating this financial liability will get us to the first concern above. Solution: Either clarify the language to read the "seizing agency" or "law enforcement agency that impounded the animal" or remove this paragraph entirely and leave it up to the court (which is how it is handled now).

Each year this bill comes up, I have no idea why it is necessary. I am not aware of a single case where the current language has deprived an animal owner of due process or caused any issues. The language proposed removes the guidance and protection that Missouri counties need when executing warrants and seizing living evidence. I urge you to oppose HB 2436.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KIMBERLY BROWN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/16/2026 8:43 AM	

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I am the vice president and chief operations officer at the Animal Protective Association of MO in St. Louis. I have worked in animal welfare for over 15 years handling all aspects of shelter operations. I am familiar with RSMo 578.018 and the importance of the confiscation and disposition process.

RSMo 578.018 currently allows for a veterinarian, animal control, or licensed animal shelter to care for animals confiscated. The addition of a third party could place the very animals seized for protection and evidence back into the hands of co-conspirators, involved parties, or someone with a shared interest in the animals. Appropriate housing and husbandry is also critical to reduce further suffering and prevent disease transmission. Providing appropriate care for abused or neglected animals, and sometimes large numbers of animals, is complex and requires skilled caregivers that understand medical and behavioral needs.

The language for 30 days and the amount of bond required is important. This change would cause hardship and deter cases in the future, leaving abused and neglected animals to suffer. Removing the time portion of the current language leaves agencies caring for animals without the ability to adopt or transfer them out. This languishing in shelters or vet clinics causes unnecessary stress for the animals, has major expense implications for the cost of daily care, and burdens already limited space at shelters.

Lastly, there is a change in the language around how costs are handled- The costs shall be the responsibility of and shall be borne and paid by the facility or organization that impounded the animal. This will lead to law enforcement agencies not impounding animals because they don't have the budget to pay for any impoundments for that year. It also could mean the veterinary clinic or the nonprofit or municipal animal shelter is responsible for the costs. They are simply the holding and caring facility, and this will deter them from helping with animals seized from animal cruelty cases. This should not be included but left up to the court, which is how it is currently handled.

In my experience these animals are some of the most vulnerable. This change does not serve Missouri's animals or constituents well.

Thank you



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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: RICHARD MCINTOSH		PHONE NUMBER: 573-257-0078
REPRESENTING: ANIMAL LEGAL DEFENSE LEGISLATIVE FUND		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 612 EAST CAPITOL AVENUE		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: richard@govconsultants.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 2:20 PM

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I am want to submit testimony in opposition to the bill. The proponents of the bill have not demonstrated any specifics on what in the current disposition process needs to be changed. Their testimony in support of the bill can be summarized as, "we don't like the disposition process for animals under any circumstances." I have prepared and will share with the committee members a flow-chart which shows each step in the current disposition process. I will forward to seeing which specific steps, the proponents of the bill want to remove or change.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: SARA SPEASE		PHONE NUMBER: 816-666-2966	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI ANIMAL CONTROL ASSOCIATION		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY: BELTON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64012
EMAIL: macatreasurer1@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 1/16/2026 10:19 AM	
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Missouri Animal Control Association strongly opposes Missouri HB 2436 because it weakens protections for animals and puts them at greater risk of ongoing abuse and neglect. Removing or limiting the role of trained animal control professionals creates dangerous gaps in enforcement and oversight. Animal control officers are often the first line of defense for abused, neglected, or abandoned animals, and they have the specialized training to recognize, document, and intervene in these situations appropriately. While law enforcement officers perform critical public safety duties, they generally do not receive sufficient specialized training in animal behavior, welfare assessment, or humane handling to properly manage animal control situations or execute animal-related warrants. Animal control officers receive targeted training to recognize signs of neglect and abuse, assess living conditions, safely handle animals, and make decisions that prioritize animal welfare and public safety.

Assigning these responsibilities to personnel without adequate animal control training increases the risk of improper handling, misinterpretation of conditions, and delayed or inappropriate intervention. These cases require specific expertise that differs from traditional law enforcement training and should be handled by professionals equipped with the appropriate skills and experience.

We oppose any provision that requires animals to be returned to their owners solely because evidence is insufficient for criminal charges. While due process and property rights are important, the absence/ dismissal/or acquittal of criminal charges does not guarantee that the animal is safe or well-cared for. Animal welfare and public safety must remain the priority.

Criminal law requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt, which is a higher standard than what is needed to ensure the safety and care of an animal. An owner may fail to meet basic care standards without committing a crime. Returning animals into these situations can place them back into harmful environments.

Animals removed due to neglect, hoarding, or unsafe conditions may continue to suffer if returned, even when charges are not filed. Protective custody allows time for assessment, rehabilitation, and placement in a safe environment, preventing unnecessary harm. The decision to return an animal should be based on welfare and safety, not solely on whether criminal charges are filed

Animals cannot speak for themselves, yet they are counting on us to protect them. When removed from neglectful or abusive situations, they rely on our judgment, compassion, and expertise to keep them safe. Returning them prematurely—or tying their fate to technicalities like whether charges are filed—puts them at risk of further suffering.

We must be their voice, their protection, and their advocate. Legislation must prioritize their welfare, public safety, and humane outcomes above all else.

We respectfully, but strongly, encourage legislators to reconsider this bill. As stewards of animal

welfare and public safety, you have the opportunity to ensure that vulnerable animals are protected.

Thank you for your consideration
Missouri Animal Control Association



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2436		DATE: 1/20/2026	
COMMITTEE: Agriculture			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH BERRY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/17/2026 2:21 PM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to HB 2436.

While the bill is framed as an animal-welfare measure, its actual effect is to expand state power to seize private property and animals while weakening due-process protections for owners, creating a structure ripe for abuse, financial coercion, and irreversible harm prior to any judicial determination of wrongdoing.

1. Expansion of Warrant Authority Without Adequate Safeguards

HB 2436 broadens law-enforcement authority to enter private property for inspection and impoundment while removing public-health officials from the process. This concentrates discretion in enforcement rather than care-based professionals and lowers the threshold for intrusion into constitutionally protected property.

Although a warrant is required, the bill fails to:
 Define meaningful limits on probable cause,
 Require exigent circumstances,
 Or provide an expedited remedy when a warrant is later found improper.

This structure allows lawful entry and seizure before guilt is determined, shifting the burden onto the owner to recover what was taken.

2. Due Process Is Replaced With Financial Leverage

The bond provisions effectively create a “pay to preserve” system, where an owner—still presumed innocent—must post security within 72 hours to prevent disposition or euthanasia of their animal.

This disproportionately harms:
 Low-income owners,
 Rural residents,
 Farmers and breeders,
 And individuals with multiple animals.

Justice should not depend on the ability to rapidly produce funds under duress.

3. Irreversible Harm Before Final Judgment

Despite language about disposition hearings, the bill still allows:

Humane killing,

Transfer of custody,

Medical procedures,

And sterilization in limited circumstances

before final adjudication of criminal charges.

Once an animal is euthanized or sterilized, no court ruling can undo that harm.

Remedies after acquittal are meaningless if the property has already been destroyed.

4. Immunity and Liability Imbalance

HB 2436 grants broad protection to authorities for property damage and seizure actions, while limiting the owner's ability to recover losses—even when no neglect or abuse is ultimately proven.

At the same time, the bill shifts financial responsibility for care depending on outcome, incentivizing:

Rapid disposition,

Settlement pressure,

Or prolonged custody without resolution.

This creates perverse incentives inconsistent with justice or animal welfare.

5. Existing Law Already Addresses Legitimate Abuse

Missouri law already provides mechanisms to intervene in cases of genuine animal abuse or neglect.

HB 2436 does not meaningfully close a gap—it rebalances power away from constitutional protections and toward unchecked enforcement discretion.

Animal welfare can and should be protected without eroding property rights, presumption of innocence, or judicial restraint.

HB 2436 is not a narrow animal-protection bill. It is a procedural expansion of state power that allows seizure first and justification later. Laws written this way are not protective—they are dangerous.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to oppose HB 2436.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2436		DATE: 1/20/2026	
COMMITTEE: Agriculture			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SARA SPEASE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/16/2026 10:27 AM	

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

Under Missouri statute, a ***“law enforcement officer” is defined as any public servant who has both the power and duty to make arrests for violations of state law. This includes officers who are authorized to carry firearms and make arrests under Missouri law as well as federal law enforcement officers with comparable authority.

Additionally, in Chapter 577 of the Missouri Revised Statutes (which covers public safety offenses), “law enforcement officer” or “arresting officer” refers back to this statutory definition in section 556.061 and also includes military policemen conducting traffic enforcement pursuant to military jurisdiction.

In practice, this means that to be considered a law enforcement officer under Missouri law, an individual must:

- Be a public servant (employed by or serving a government entity)
- Have statutory authority to make arrests for violations of criminal law
- Be empowered to enforce laws and carry out related duties within the scope of that authority.

Animal control officers and humane investigators perform essential law enforcement functions that protect public safety, animal welfare, and community health. Their duties include investigating cruelty and neglect cases, enforcing state and local laws, collecting evidence, issuing citations, and working directly with prosecutors and courts. These responsibilities require specialized training, legal authority, and professional judgment consistent with law enforcement roles.

While both law enforcement officers and animal control officers share responsibilities related to public safety and legal enforcement, their training focuses on different areas, and only partially overlaps:

Areas of Overlap:

- Legal authority and enforcement procedures: Both receive training on executing warrants, understanding statutory authority, documenting evidence, and interacting with the court system.
- Public safety: Both are trained to manage potentially dangerous situations involving humans, property, or animals.
- Reporting and documentation: Both must accurately record incidents for legal and administrative purposes.

Key Differences / Gaps:

- Animal behavior and handling: Animal control officers are trained to recognize signs of stress, fear, or aggression in animals and use humane handling techniques. Law enforcement officers typically receive limited or no formal training in this area.
- Animal welfare assessment: Animal control officers learn to identify neglect, abuse, unsanitary conditions, and health risks in animals—skills critical for timely intervention.
- Specialized equipment and techniques: Animal control uses tools such as catch poles,

traps, muzzles, and proper restraint devices; law enforcement officers are not routinely trained in these methods.

- **Case management for animals: Animal control training emphasizes intervention, rehabilitation, and shelter coordination, while law enforcement training focuses primarily on criminal prosecution.**

While law enforcement officers can enforce animal cruelty laws, animal control officers bring specialized expertise that ensures humane handling, rapid intervention, and appropriate care.

Recognizing this overlap—and the gaps—is essential when crafting legislation, allocating responsibilities, or determining law enforcement authority in animal welfare cases.

Recognizing animal control officers as law enforcement ensures they have the authority, protections, and resources necessary to carry out their duties safely and effectively. It also supports proper enforcement of animal welfare laws by placing investigations in the hands of trained professionals with expertise in animal behavior, humane handling, and welfare assessment.

Formal recognition strengthens accountability, improves interagency cooperation, and enhances outcomes for both public safety and animal protection. For these reasons, animal control officers should be recognized as law enforcement professionals within Missouri’s statutory framework even though they do not have arresting powers.

Animal control officers, Humane Investigators and law enforcement officers often handle the same offenders and crime often overlaps.

Animal control officers perform critical public safety functions that extend beyond traditional animal care. They investigate cases of animal cruelty, neglect, and hoarding; execute warrants; collect evidence; and enforce state and local laws. In doing so, they often respond to emergency situations alongside law enforcement, including dangerous animals, hoarding situations, and incidents that threaten both human and animal safety.

Despite these responsibilities, animal control officers are not consistently recognized as law enforcement or first responders, which limits their authority, access to resources, and legal protections. Recognizing them as law enforcement and first responders would ensure they receive the training, support, and protections necessary to safely and effectively perform their duties. It would also acknowledge their role in safeguarding public health, animal welfare, and community safety.