

READYBORZOI

Snowball's plight helped set into motion historic legislation that revolutionized the way we treat animals in times of disaster.



Snowball's Legacy

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a tearful little boy being shuttled to safety had his little white dog torn from his arms. The boy was among the thousands sheltered at the New Orleans Superdome. The boy cried out — “Snowball! Snowball!” — then vomited in distress. The confrontation was first reported by The Associated Press. Tragically, Snowball was never reunited with his boy despite the efforts of many. This scene was played out over and over across a ravaged Gulf Coast. Congressmen Tom Lantos (D-California) indicated that the image of a child being separated from his dog was the bill's catalyst:

“The dog was taken away from this little boy, and to watch his face was a singularly revealing and tragic experience. This legislation was born at that moment.”

The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS) was introduced by Congressmen Lantos and Christopher Shays (R-Connecticut) on September 22, 2005. The bill passed the House of Representatives on May 22, 2006 and was signed into law by President George W. Bush on October 6, 2006. The bill is now Public Law 109-308.

2015 marks the 10th anniversary of Gulf Coast Hurricanes Katrina and Rita...events that tragically illustrated the vulnerability of pets in disaster, how the human bond to pets affected evacuation, and the lack of organization or planning. These natural and man-made disasters set into motion an unprecedented rescue and shelter effort of over 6,000 pets in a multi-state region.

Thousands of animals perished or were permanently separated from their owners. Hundreds of rescued animals were lost in the system, illegally adopted out, stolen, or died in ill-run transport.

Many people, unwilling to be separated from their pets, endangered themselves by not evacuating or by returning to flooded and unsafe areas to rescue their animals. The world watched as inconsolable owners were forced to evacuate without their pets.

Donate With Caution

As occurs in nearly every disaster, individuals and organizations take advantage. HSUS through marketing and advertising efforts raised \$34 million in the wake of

Hurricane Katrina, allegedly to help save stranded and lost pets, and reunite them with their owners. Little of that money went towards its intended purpose. Only after Louisiana's Attorney General initiated an 18-month-long investigation did HSUS agree to contribute \$600,000 toward the construction of an animal shelter. In 2009, an ABC affiliate reported that public disclosures of the disposition of the \$34 million in Katrina-related donations added up to less than \$7 million.

Insure your generous help is being spent wisely. Charity Navigator is a great resource for large institutions. State veterinarian organizations are another.

Make A Plan

The Federal PETS Act requires every state to include pets in their disaster plans. Look up yours to understand the chain of command and resources it does and does not provide.

Make a plan customized to your risks. Prepare for disaster and take steps to avoid it. Ready Borzoi offers many ideas and tips.

Lastly, please consider adding the Ready Borzoi link to your websites as a resource to others.

For more resources on preparedness visit: borzoiclubofamerica.org/readyborzoi.

Comments or suggestions are welcomed! Please send to Veni Harlan, ReadyBorzoi chair, farfieldborzoi@mac.com.