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March 17, 2006

The Honorable Ted Stevens
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am writing to you on behalf of the more than 400,000 members of the American Bar Association to express our appreciation for your concern for companion and service animals as part of our nation's emergency planning. Legal barriers and poor coordination during the series of powerful Gulf storms last year prevented many people with animals from safely evacuating or accessing critical services. We believe that enactment of legislation that removes these barriers coupled with the requisite resources will serve families and the disabled in times of calamity thereby promoting physical, emotional and psychological recovery for those displaced.

We would like to take this opportunity to suggest several matters that remedial legislation might address. Legislation should address the need for states to both include procedures for animal rescue, care and management as well as the resources necessary for their implementation. A bill might further include a mechanism for determining authority among state and local governments and organizations during rescue and shelter activities. Legislation might also take into account any chronic needs of state and local animal response agencies within the National Response Plan and National Incident Management System.

We also ask that you consider whether a specialized advisory committee including state and non-governmental organizations would enhance FEMA's ability to address the particular demands of animal rescue and recovery. And because responsibility for companion and service animals lies first and ultimately with the families with which they live, we ask that you consider for inclusion a FEMA-directed public service advertising campaign urging families to include provision for their animals.

Consistent with the need for dedicated resources, such legislation should include a realistic authorization of appropriations necessary to carry out its proposals. Further, we ask that you consider whether federal cost-sharing would be available to states for animal response activities as it is for activities to protect human life and property.

Once again, thank you for your willingness to focus attention on the needs of companion and service animals as part of our nation's emergency response planning. We welcome any opportunity to work with you on such legislation that properly recognizes the indispensable role these animals play in the human family.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Evans