



OP-ED: Should Businesses Beware of Service Dogs?

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Rich Meneghello's article "OP-ED: Should Businesses Beware of Service Dogs?" was featured in *DJC Oregon* on December 3, 2014.

Businesses across the state received a wake-up call last month after a Eugene convenience store was slapped with a \$60,000 penalty by the state after the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries found that the store illegally banned service dogs from the premises. The story should serve as a warning to all business owners who open their doors to the public that they need to learn, understand and apply some very strict and unforgiving rules regarding service animals.

In the article, Rich provides employers with some helpful tips for dealing with such situations involving service dogs.

First and foremost, there are very strict rules about what one can ask animals' owners when they enter a business. One can begin by asking if the animal is a "service animal." If the person says no, then a business owner has every right to exclude it. If the answer is yes, one can follow up by asking what duties the service animal performs for them (unless it is patently obvious, such as a blind person with a seeing-eye dog). That's it.

People aren't allowed to have the individual perform a demonstration (especially if the service dog is trained to respond to some medical emergency). Also, a business owner can't require the animal to wear a special vest - although many might have such gear, it is not required under the law. Also, one can't ask to see special certifications or training licenses, because some animals may be "trained" at home and not have such documentation.

Therefore, in most situations, if the person provides adequate responses to the above questions, the best course of action is to allow them on the premises. One can monitor to make sure the animal stays in control and does not act in a disruptive manner (barking, snarling, engaging with other customers or staff, making an unnecessary mess). And if the animal becomes disruptive one can ask its owner to leave. Beyond that, businesses ought to welcome service animals and the customers who accompany them, recognizing that it is good business (and the law) to accommodate them.

To read the full article, please visit [*DJC Oregon*](#). [subscription required]

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