

Updating Wyoming's White Cane Laws

Tom Lealos, Vice-President

Wyoming Council of the Blind

As the population of our state increases and gets older, the percentage of low vision and blind citizens also grows exponentially. It is estimated that there are approximately 8,000 visually impaired individuals currently living in our state. Since we have become a very mobile society, it naturally follows that more and more people are traveling with white canes and dog guides. In this regard, the Wyoming Council of the Blind (WyCB) has recognized the need to visit and re-evaluate our state's White Cane Laws and accompanying regulations in our Driver's Safety Manuals. It is obvious that changes need to be made.

To this end, WyCB is mounting an effort to collect as much personal anecdotal information as possible to build a case for the necessary changes. We need your help to make this happen.

It is a fact that the fines and penalties for abusing an animal in Wyoming woefully exceed those for injuring a person using a white cane or dog guide to travel in their community. What is wrong with this picture? This inconsistency should raise a bright red flag with every visually impaired person in the state.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? If you or a family member or friend have experienced a potential or actual vehicular accident while traveling with a white cane or dog guide within Wyoming in recent years or just don't do so because of unsafe traffic conditions, we are asking you to please share the experience with us. In so doing, we ask that you include your name, address, your contact information, date of incident if known, location of the incident, ie; city, street, intersection, highway, and a detailed description of what happened as best you can recall. If you feel strongly enough about your incident, please indicate if you would be willing to appear before a Legislative committee to tell your story in person.

Your information can be sent by December 1st to Tom Lealos at: 221 W. Pat Ohara Dr., Powell, WY 82435, or by Email at: twlealos47@gmail.com. If you have any questions, you can call Tom at: (307)764-3664 or Past-President, Sherry Leinen at: (307)746-6166.

Since this is going to be a state-wide undertaking, we will need volunteers to help with the many tasks involved with an advocacy effort. Please let Tom or Sherry know if you can lend your talents to assist in any way.

Remember, there is strength in numbers and to be successful, we must speak out together and be our own best advocates.