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## **Californian Wildfires Highlight Need for Pet Evacuation Planning**

*Sen. Monica R. Martinez introduces legislation to improve evacuations and shelter options for animal companions in New York.*

**ALBANY, N.Y.** – The Los Angeles wildfires, which devastated neighborhoods and forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes, have renewed attention on evacuation protocols for pet owners, many of whom refuse to leave danger zones without clear plans for their animals. Among them was 85-year-old Annette Rossilli, who, [according to CNN](#), died in her car outside her California home after declining to evacuate because she wanted to stay with her dog, turtle, canary, and two parrots. To help prevent similar tragedies in New York, state Sen. Monica R. Martinez has introduced [legislation](#) requiring local emergency management plans to include preparations for accommodating animals.

The proposal would enhance local comprehensive emergency management plans by requiring the identification of animal-friendly temporary housing and facilities during evacuations. It also calls for establishing partnerships with animal shelters, societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and veterinary services to support emergency responses involving animals.

“Lives are put at risk when evacuation plans overlook the bond between people and their animals,” said Sen. Martinez. “This legislation protects both humans and their pets by requiring local emergency management plans to include accommodations for these animals, ensuring no one feels forced to choose between their safety and their beloved companions. The enhancements within this bill will save lives and help communities respond more effectively when emergencies strike.”

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In a separate [bill](#), Sen. Martinez has proposed establishing a grant program to assist organizations and municipal shelters that serve people with companion animals experiencing homelessness or are victims of domestic violence. Victims of domestic violence or homelessness with animals often remain in their current living situation to avoid being separated from their pets, putting both themselves and their animals at risk. This proposal would support co-sheltering initiatives, including funding for veterinary care, facility renovations to accommodate companion animals, and resources to maintain these integrated emergency housing programs.

The two bills were part of more than 50 proposals Sen. Martinez introduced during the legislature's first week of the new session, which began Wednesday. For a full list of bills introduced last week, [click here](#).