

Fake service dogs a growing problem



Britton is a member of the Prescription Pet Team.
Photo/Tom Ward

By Wes Siler, Outside

Here in famously pet-friendly Los Angeles, I encounter dogs that are blatantly not service animals on a daily basis. Recently, during a morning visit to my local café, I laughed when a woman whose tiny dog was thrashing around at the limits of its leash and barking fiercely at other customers loudly proclaimed that it was a service animal. “It’s my service dog,” she said to me, scowling. “You’re not allowed to ask me why I need it!”

Data backs my anecdote up. A study conducted at UC Davis found that the number of “therapy dogs” or “emotional support animals” registered by animal control facilities in the state increased 1,000 percent between 2002 and 2012.

This has recently led state governments to try and curb the problem through law. In California, the penalty is \$1,000 and up to six months in jail.

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