



Oct 5, 2021

Ohio Senate Committee: Agriculture and Natural Resources
Proponent Testimony: Ohio Senate Bill 164

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee: My name is Lydia Stone and I am a board member of the Ohio Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Ohio SPCA) and a resident of Franklin County.

On behalf of the Ohio SPCA I am testifying in support of SB164 which will 1) Ban the use of gas chambers to euthanize shelter animals, 2) Increase penalties to a Felony in the 4th degree (F4) for egregious acts of cruelty that results in the death of a companion animal, 3) Adds a Felony in the 5th degree for anyone who knowingly organizes, promotes, aides, or abets in the violation of the 4th degree felony, 4) Classifies felony and M1 violations of animal cruelty as “offenses of violence,” 5) Allow use of drugs for chemical capture, and 6) Permit the use of sedation drugs by certified euthanasia technicians.

The easiest and I believe the most effective way for me to justify support of SB164 is to give a brief history of the Ohio SPCA’s efforts to rid Ohio of gas chambers and ensure humane euthanasia by injection. In 2001, we started setting up a network of volunteer county coordinators in order to conduct community outreach and find out how we could help county shelters lower the number of animals being euthanized. However, what our county coordinators uncovered set us on a completely different path. For a nation entering the 21st century, the discoveries behind closed doors and behind county shelters were barbaric, shocking, and heartbreaking. At this time, a representative with a national animal organization told us that we would not succeed and that they had been sending “candy-coated letters” for 20 years. They believed that change had to come from within a county. Change was not going to come from within so we proceeded and began taking action. During the past 20 years, the Ohio SPCA has gone county to county uncovering and eliminating the horrific euthanasia taking place in shelters. Through direct intervention, cooperation with county officials, media exposure, public support, and three successful lawsuits the routine use of gunshot, engine exhaust, homemade gas boxes and commercial gas chambers, and improper administration of intracardiac injection has ended in over 27 Ohio counties.

On June 11, 2021, Ohio SPCA attorney John Bell sent a records request to the Erie County Commissioners. Six days later on June 17, the last gas chamber was removed in Ohio! We finally had full victory with Ohio now being a no-gassing state.

What follows is a brief description of what we have encountered on our 20 year journey. In one county we found a homemade gas box built into the wall. The box was full of webs because the dog warden had started shooting the dogs in the head behind the shelter. However, the stick used to beat back dogs already in the cement box while more dogs were loaded was still there. In another county shooting was the only method and 600 dogs a year met this fate behind an old barn where they were then buried in shallow graves. As Ohio SPCA representatives visited the site to gather evidence, they were literally walking on fur, collars, and bones sticking out of the ground. In numerous other counties we found homemade gas boxes inside and outside of shelters. One dog warden openly complained of headaches despite the use of a gas mask. Previously in this county, dead dogs were often left in the gas box and more dogs simply shoved in on top of the bodies and gassed. Over 1600 dogs a year died in this homemade gas box. In more than one county, commercial gas chambers were found to have failed resulting in animals being put through more than one cycle when found to still be alive. Years ago, our executive director personally took home an animal that survived the gas chamber because workers didn’t have the heart to gas him



again. In one county, the gas chamber door was found to be taped around the edges in order to prevent leakage of the gas. Crowding excessive numbers of dogs into the gas boxes and chambers and the absence of compartments has also taken place. To save money, one county placed dogs in metal boxes in the bed of a pick-up truck and then used the engine exhaust to kill them. Over the years, these discoveries along with witness testimony and undercover video obtained have confirmed that the euthanasia process for these animals was extremely cruel and merciless.

Most of what we have dealt with has centered around the use of homemade gas boxes and gas chambers. However, we have encountered two counties where intracardiac injection was used on dogs that were fully conscious. This is already prohibited by Ohio law. Necropsies showed injection sites in the lungs, diaphragm, and elsewhere. Death was a long painful process for these dogs. Circumstances in both counties indicated that the individuals involved were not only callous, but incompetent. However, when intracardiac injection is used, pre-euthanasia drugs must be available.

During our 20 year journey, several legislative bills regarding gassing have been introduced and of course none of them became law. Hopefully, this is the last time such a bill will have to be introduced. I believe the history I have described justifies the need for SB164 to become a law so that gas chambers are banned forever, drugs for chemical capture may be used, and the use of sedation drugs by certified euthanasia technicians permitted. Passage of SB164 into law will prevent history from repeating itself. Additionally, SB 164 will increase penalties for the most heinous and egregious acts of animal abuse against companion animals. Working throughout Ohio, the Ohio SPCA has found that there is rampant animal cruelty taking place. Increased penalties will send a clear message to animal abusers that animal abuse will not be tolerated in Ohio.

I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of SB164 and I thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today.

Lydia Stone
Ohio SPCA
P.O. Box 546
Grove City, Ohio 43123
740-420-2984
ohiospca@gmail.com

To see our pictorial journey of fighting for humane euthanasia, please visit:
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