

Hello, my name is Cate Arroe. I am the Director of the Animal Rescue Coalition of Mecosta County.

Until recently, the Mecosta County Animal Shelter was one of a handful of shelters in the State of Michigan utilizing gas chamber euthanasia. This shelter is a private, for-profit shelter that is contracted by the county to provide services. It has been managed by the same people for over twenty years.

Last summer, a group of us began a petition drive to rid our shelter of gas chamber euthanasia. We submitted almost 2,000 signatures to our county board of commissioners in the fall.

As we spoke to people around the county it became clear that the overwhelming majority of people were against the practice. Of the approximately 1,000 people that I spoke with personally, there were only two people who thought that gas chamber euthanasia was an acceptable practice. People were shocked to learn that this inhumane practice still exists in the 21st century. More often than not, I was asked why our shelter still euthanized in this manner. I have never been able to come up with an explanation. It is not because of the cost and it is not because of lack of training. This is a practice that cannot be logically defended.

After we brought our petitions to the commissioners, it appeared that we were not going to be successful in bringing about the change we were hoping for, so we decided our only recourse was to begin the process of opening our own private shelter as an alternative to the county shelter. As it happened, the current shelter managers decided to retire, perhaps as a result of public outcry, and we were able to submit a proposal to run our county shelter.

We are currently building a shelter that we hope to have open by the end of the summer. We are pleased to have this opportunity to improve the lives of dogs and cats by operating our own facility, but it is unfortunate that we had to go to the length of building an entirely new shelter so that pets would get the basic care that they deserve. Sometimes, the only act of kindness that we will have the opportunity to show an animal is to humanely euthanize him. An animal who has already suffered does not deserve to end his life in a gas chamber when there is a much better alternative.

The well-being of animals should not rely on the extreme measures that we have had to take to provide the basic standard of care that people expect from their county shelters. The humane treatment of thousands of animals should not be determined by a handful of individuals in our state. If these bills were brought to a vote by the people of the State of Michigan, judging by Mecosta County, they would pass by a landslide. However, citizens do not have this opportunity. I ask you to consider the views of your constituents as you weigh the merits of these bills. You have an opportunity to reduce the suffering of countless animals. Please make the humane choice.