



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Senate Approves Oppenheimer Bill Requiring the Most Humane Animal Euthanasia Practices

SUZI OPPENHEIMER September 17, 2009

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Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) announced Senate passage of her bill, S. 4962-B, which significantly updates New York state laws regarding the euthanasia of animals. The measure would ban the euthanasia of animals by lethal gassing and ensure that animal euthanasia is performed in the most humane manner possible.

“Every year millions of homeless, abandoned or abused animals are euthanized in the United States, often for no other reason than that they lack a loving home,” observed Senator Oppenheimer. “This bill will ensure that these animals, at the very least, receive the most humane death possible.”

The Act specifies that the euthanasia of animals is to be performed solely by means of an injection of sodium pentobarbital or sodium pentobarbital solution administered by a certified euthanasia technician, licensed veterinarian or licensed veterinary technician.

Whenever euthanasia is performed by the intracardiac injection of these lethal drugs, the law requires that the animal be first heavily sedated, anesthetized or comatose. Under no circumstances may an animal shelter, pound, humane society or society for the prevention of cruelty to animals perform euthanasia by intracardiac injection on a non-sedated animal.

Only a licensed veterinarian may perform this procedure on animals that are not heavily sedated, anesthetized or comatose and only after he or she determines that this is the most humane option available.

Although animal euthanasia by gassing is not commonly performed in New York, the law specifically prohibits this practice, requiring that any animal gas chambers located in the state be dismantled within 90 days of enactment. The legislation further specifies that no animal shall be left unattended between the time the euthanasia procedure begins and death is confirmed. Violations of this Act are punishable by a civil penalty of not more than \$500.

“Our pets are members of the family,” noted Senator Oppenheimer, a lifelong animal lover. “Anyone who has experienced the heartbreak of putting down a beloved pet knows the importance of ending an animal’s suffering with as little discomfort as possible.”

“The ASPCA recognizes the inevitable need for euthanasia as a last-step, end-of-the-road option to spare animals further hardship and suffering,” said Debora Bresch of the ASPCA. “We thank Assemblywoman Paulin and Senator Oppenheimer for their tireless efforts to assure homeless animals of humane treatment at the end of their lives and we look forward to the day when euthanasia of unwanted animals is an infrequent occurrence.”

“I am pleased to have sponsored this legislation in the Senate and to have worked closely with Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, who sponsored the companion bill, A.999-B that passed the Assembly earlier this year,” concluded Senator Oppenheimer. “I urge the Governor to sign the measure into law.”