

Georgians Sue Over Gas Chamber Euthanization

Former lawmaker and ex-vet tech. say some shelters are illegally using gas chambers.

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A former Georgia state lawmaker and a licensed veterinary technician have filed a lawsuit to try to keep Georgia animal shelters from using carbon monoxide chambers to euthanize dogs and cats.

The lawsuit, filed March 12 in Fulton County Superior Court by former Rep. Chesley Morton and a former Humane Society worker named Jennifer Robinson, claims the Georgia Department of Agriculture is violating state law by allowing gas chamber euthanizations instead of injections.

Gas chambers were outlawed as a form of euthanasia in Georgia after the passing of the Humane Euthanasia Act in 1990, which mandated that lethal injection — which is considered more humane — to be the sole form of euthanization at animal shelters.

The euthanization law states: “Dogs and cats who have to be killed in shelters must be given the most humane and stress-free death possible ... the use of sodium pentobarbital or a derivative of it shall be the exclusive method.”

Morton and Robinson are asking for the state to not issue licenses to any new shelters that would use gas chambers and to not renew licenses of current shelters if they don't stop the euthanization method.

However, Agriculture Department Commissioner Tommy Irvin has insisted in the past that gas chambers are a legal and practical method to euthanize animals, particularly because some rural Georgia animal shelters don't have easy access to a veterinarian, a requirement for injections.