

Good Evening Senators.

My name is Joe Elmore. I am a resident of Johns Island, SC and a graduate of Greer High School in Greer, SC and I have an engineering degree from the University of Alabama. I am the Chief Executive Officer for Charleston Animal Society.

I am also a Certified Animal Welfare Administrator, credentialed by the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators. I am a member of the South Carolina Animal Care & Control Association and the South Carolina Association of Nonprofit Organizations. I have testified before a number of committees in our legislature and other states and have presented at several regional and national conferences.

Prior to taking the helm of Charleston Animal Society in 2012, I served as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals', aka ASPCA, Senior representative addressing issues across the Southeast for 6 years, including leading the ASPCA's long-term recovery efforts on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. I have visited many shelters and rescues across South Carolina and the nation.

Over 140 years old, Charleston Animal Society was the first animal organization in South Carolina and is one of the oldest animal organizations in the nation. The Animal Society is an open admission shelter, which means it does not turn animals away, and is the contracted vendor for the disposition of animals in Charleston County. Charleston County government pays less than 30% of the cost to deliver those services. The Animal Society subsidizes the government by approximately \$1.5 million dollars.

The Animal Society is an institution in our community and state. It is South Carolina's most honored charity for two years running, and, for over 140 years, its mission has always been the same – preventing cruelty to animals, a mission defined long before the emergence of state associations and the like who attempt to redefine it.

There are a lot of misconceptions about animal care, control and rescue organizations. I want to help folks understand what Charleston Animal Society's mission is about. To fulfill its 140-year old mission of preventing cruelty to animals, it engages 9 strategies, which are:

1. Finding homes for homeless animals through adoptions and fostering network
2. Preventing births of unwanted animals through a high-volume, high-quality spay& neuter program
3. Reducing the number of free roaming cats through a trap-vaccinate-alter & return-to-habitat plan
4. Reuniting loved ones with their families through an in-depth lost and found program

5. Containing outbreaks of deadly diseases through a communitywide rabies and infectious disease vaccination program
6. Saving the lives of abused, abandoned and unwanted animals through individually customized treatment regimens
7. Fighting animal cruelty wherever it exists through assisting law enforcement and advocating for stronger laws
8. Helping families keep their pets for life through a nonjudgmental pet-focused food bank and a network of support for underserved communities and families
9. Guiding children to grow into humanitarians through a comprehensive humane education initiative

The Animal Society handles over 90% of the animals in Charleston County and, in 2013, led Charleston County to become the first No Kill Community in the Southeast. The Animal Society subscribes to the mainstream definition of No Kill, that is, saving every healthy and treatable animal.

On a daily basis this is what I see across our state and region –

- Inadequate funding for animal care (shelters) and control agencies and its officers, leading to the unnecessary death and surrender of tens of thousands of pets.
- Unaffordable and inaccessible veterinary care for folks who are financially struggling, and you don't have to meet dated definitions of "low-income" to be financially struggling.
- Families forced to give up their family pets due to landlord and housing restrictions, not based on behavioral experience, but based on stereotypes and inaccurate information.
- Countless animals that are neglected, abused, fought, tortured, mutilated, poisoned and killed due to intentional and unintentional reasons.
- The chaining and roping, aka tethering of dogs, making them aggressive, leading to unsafe neighborhoods and families
- The out-of-control breeding, particularly of Pit Bull type dogs, overwhelming shelters such as ours.
- The absence of pet registration so that animals could be returned in the field rather than overwhelming shelters.
- And, last year, the underhanded, ill-advised, unsubstantiated, mean-spirited, uncollaborative bill brought to the legislature by the State Association of Veterinarians, which, if passed, would have taken us back to the dark ages and led to the killing of tens

of thousands of helpless animals, a measure that was overwhelmingly opposed by 89% of the public and multiple associations.

But, I also see --

The effectiveness of research and data-based strategies that are bringing down the overpopulation of companion animals and providing more outreach to communities and neighborhoods, making them safer and healthier for the families who live there...strategies that led our county to become a no kill community, without the oversight, regulation and control of outside agencies, associations or legislation.

We offer the following means to address these issues --

- Inadequate funding for animal care (shelters) and control agencies and its officers, leading to the unnecessary death and surrender of tens of thousands of pets. **Adopt the Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters and the National Animal Care & Control Association's Guidelines, along with minimal standards of training for ACOs and standards for adoption/rescue organizations.**
- Unaffordable and inaccessible veterinary care for folks who are financially struggling, and you don't have to meet dated definitions of "low-income" to be financially struggling. *According to the ASPCA, the average annual pet care cost for a large dog is \$1,843 and for a cat is \$1,035. I, like many Southerners, have multiple animals (3 dogs and 2 cats). The average pet care costs for me are \$7,073, not including emergencies such as snakebite, etc.* **Ensure veterinary services are accessible and affordable for all by supporting, rather than, opposing nonprofit services that prevent animals from entering shelters.**
- Families forced to give up their family pets due to landlord and housing restrictions, not based on behavioral experience, but based on stereotypes and inaccurate information. **Only allow pets to be restricted based on their behavior, not breed or weight. (i.e. Allstate, State Farm, etc.)**
- Countless animals that are neglected, abused, fought, tortured, mutilated, poisoned and killed due to intentional and unintentional reasons. **Increase capacity to enforce current laws and steadily increase penalties and eliminate the multitude of local ordinances addressing cruelty. It's confusing and not consistently implemented. Cross-reference offenders.**
- The chaining and roping, aka tethering of dogs, making them aggressive, leading to unsafe neighborhoods and families. **Outlaw the tethering of animals altogether. It**

leads to people getting mauled and killed, such as in Bishopville, SC, a pit bull broke free from a chain staked to the ground, mauling and killing 65- year-old Ethel Horton as she tried to protect her 71-year-old husband who was being attacked by the dog. This happens all too often and the victims are usually small children or the elderly.

- The out-of-control breeding, particularly of Pit Bull type dogs and hounds, who are often abandoned, overwhelming shelters such as ours. *Only 21% of both dogs and cats are obtained from animal shelters. The overwhelming majority come from friends and relatives.* **Implement mandatory spay/neuter of pets, particularly dogs, with minimal exceptions.**
- The absence of pet registration so that animals could be returned in the field rather than overwhelming shelters. **Implement mandatory registration and microchipping of dogs and cats.**
- And, last year, the underhanded, ill-advised, unsubstantiated, mean-spirited, uncollaborative, disingenuous and hurtful bill brought to the legislature by the State Association of Veterinarians, which, if passed, would have taken us back to the dark ages and led to the killing of tens of thousands of helpless animals, a measure that was overwhelmingly opposed by 89% of the public, according to a Post and Courier (Charleston) poll and numerous associations and organizations.
 - For over a year, not one shred of data, evidence, research, etc. has been produced by SCAV to support their assertions that --
 - Animal shelters, nonprofits and government agencies are not qualified to practice veterinary medicine for the public, and
 - Standards in shelters and the quality of medical care has suffered
 - Nonprofit and government organizations are taking private practice business away.
 - Contradictory evidence is abundant, such as, these facts –
 - Re: Qualifications -- Of the last 100 complaints brought to the South Carolina Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, 99 were against private practice veterinarians. Only one was brought against a shelter veterinarian and it was a procedural error, not medical or surgical. Shamefully, SCAV softened their stand last year and offered that nonprofits and government agencies could practice veterinary medicine for the public, but only if the public was “low income” individuals.
 - Re: Standards in Shelters and Quality of Care -- Since 2009, Charleston Animal Society’s euthanasia rate decreased from 55.8% to 9.7% (46.1

percentage points); SC euthanasia decreased from 56.8% to 32.8% (24 ppt). Many more animals are being saved instead of being killed...enough said!!!

- Re: Nonprofits and Government Agencies Taking Business Away -- 2013 US Veterinary Workforce Study – Implication 1: Excess Capacity of Veterinarians and Veterinary Services states “...the supply of veterinarians in the United States in 2012 exceeded the demand for veterinarians by approximately 11,250 at current pricing levels for services.” Nowhere was competition with nonprofit and government organizations indicated. Other studies, such as the National Research Council, draw similar conclusions. These are published by the American Veterinary Medical Association.
 - Also, the 2011-2012 American Pet Products Association (APPA) Survey indicated pet ownership was at its highest level in two decades and pet owners are willing to pay when it comes to a pet’s health.

In addition, before a House Agriculture Subcommittee, I invited the leadership of the SCAV to visit Charleston and learn how we have managed a working relationship with our veterinarian community and built a No Kill Community. While they indicated during the meeting that they were receptive to this, they never took me up on the offer, yet they created a bill to control our organizations without ever giving the animal organization community or municipalities and counties the courtesy of a heads-up, much less inviting input.

This is not an attack on SCAV, rather exposing their false agenda and claims.

You can call it many things – “a red herring, barking up the wrong tree and you can fool some of the people all of the time, etc.” come to mind, but I describe the SCAV effort as “that dog don’t hunt.”

We have a number of worthwhile issues related to companion animals in our state to address. We’ve offered recommended responses to them so that we can make our communities, neighborhoods and families safer and healthier.

Senators, thank you for your time.