Another problem cited in the report concerns the age of animals at the time of euthanasia. A substantial number of the animals euthanized at shelters and pounds are kittens and puppies. Young animals, with their greater tolerance for oxygen deprivation, have been known to survive the greater tolerance for oxygen deprivation. The limited space capacity of the chamber as well as the inevitable troubles which occur with any mechanical device present additional practical disadvantages.

Eight states (Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts and Virginia) have banned decompression chambers and the affected shelters are now using methods such as sodium pentobarbital injection or filtered carbon monoxide poisoning. The use of barbiturates, in particular, compares favorably in cost to the high altitude decompression chamber, requires no mechanical maintenance and is effective regardless of the animal’s age or physical condition.

The Ohio Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) has not taken an official stand on the bill. However, OVMA Executive Secretary Gene King said that the association has “periodically reaffirmed” its agreement with the American Veterinary Medical Association’s guidelines on euthanasia. The latest report of the AVMA Panel on Euthanasia states that although rapid decompression is a satisfactory procedure for euthanasia under ideal conditions, “...because many difficulties have arisen in using decompression and because there is a general lack of understanding of how hypoxia affects animals, other methods of euthanasia are preferable” (AVMA 173:59-72, 1978).

Hearings on the bill began in January 1980.