



NAVEC

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The War on Charity Vet Care

The people who fought to stop charities from saving poor families' pets are the same people your state trusts with every veterinary license.

WHAT THIS REPORT IS ABOUT

Charity clinics spay, vaccinate, and treat the pets of families who cannot afford a private veterinarian. This report shows how the veterinary associations, the national AVMA and its state chapters, worked to shut those clinics down, shrink what they may do, and decide who they may help.

WHAT IT PROVES

None of this was an accident. The proof is in bill texts, legislative journals, a governor's veto, board records, a federal agency's findings, and the associations' own words. In South Carolina, a rule keeping charity clinics "out of eyesight" of private practices was slipped into a bill about drug labels and passed over a veto. In Alabama, a state board run by private veterinarians prosecuted charity surgeons until a judge, a governor, and a lawsuit stopped it. In Texas, a thirty-four-year-old law still bars shelter veterinarians from treating a poor family's pet, and the state association killed the repair. The national association wrote the policy, hosted the planning, and ran the alert system. The same organization controls the gates to the profession, as NAVEC Reports No. 1 to No. 6 document.

"Allowing it to become law would be an undue economic protection measure for private veterinarians."

Governor Nikki R. Haley, veto message on South Carolina S. 980, June 8, 2016. The legislature overrode her one week later.

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Written for pet owners, for shelters and charities, and for the working veterinarians and independently owned clinics who had no vote in any of this. The target of this report is a members' club, not a profession.

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BEFORE YOU START

Read this first

This report is written so that anyone can follow it. You do not need to know anything about veterinary medicine, lobbying, or the law. Every organization is explained the first time it appears, and a full list of names and short forms is in Appendix A.

Three groups appear over and over. The **American Veterinary Medical Association** (AVMA) is the national trade association for veterinarians. Each state has its own **state veterinary medical association** (a "state VMA"). On paper each state association is a separate corporation. In practice they are chapters of one movement: they seat the AVMA's House of Delegates, nominate its directors, copy its model law, receive its alerts, and meet at its symposium to plan state fights.^{1,2} This report calls them chapters. It is important to understand what these groups are not. They are not a public agency. They are not "the profession." They are a dues-funded members' club that exists to protect its members' business, run by insiders the way an old-fashioned union is run. No pet owner voted for them. Most working veterinarians never voted on any of this either. When this report says "the club," it means the AVMA and its chapters together. The third group is the **state veterinary board**, a government agency that licenses veterinarians and can punish them. In many states its members are picked from lists the state association sends to the governor.^{3,4}

The people hurt in this report are not veterinarians. They are the poorest pet owners in each state, and their animals. A charity clinic is usually the only door open to them. The club's campaign was to narrow that door, move it out of sight, and put a guard on it.

HOW TO READ THE EVIDENCE

Small numbers like this⁵ point to the numbered references at the back. Each reference gives the document and a web link so you can check it yourself. Where this report quotes someone, the words are theirs. Where it draws a conclusion, the sentence says so. NAVEC does not claim to know what is in anyone's heart. It reads the record, and the record is enough.

A note on tone. This is not a neutral report. NAVEC has read the record and concluded that what it shows is indefensible. Prosecuting a surgeon a judge has cleared is indefensible. Writing a law that a charity may not help a family within sight of a private business is indefensible. Telling a family that earns \$45,000 a year it is not poor enough to vaccinate its dog is indefensible. The report says so plainly, and then shows you the documents.

PART I

The case in one page

Here is what the documents prove, in order. Each charge has its own chapter.

Charge one: they hid the rule inside an unrelated bill

In January 2016, two South Carolina senators filed a short bill about labels on animal prescription drugs.⁶The Senate passed it 40 to 0. It was still about labels.⁷On June 1, 2016, the day before final passage, a House committee substitute replaced the whole bill. The new text set rules for animal shelters. It included this sentence: a nonprofit shelter's mobile clinic "is prohibited from operating within eyesight of the nearest privately owned veterinarian practice."⁸The governor vetoed it. She wrote that "pro-veterinary groups tacked this arbitrary and obstructionist provision" onto the bill.⁵The legislature overrode her 37 to 4 and 92 to 3.⁷It is the law today.⁹

Charge two: they used a government board to prosecute charity surgeons

From 2011 to 2017, the Alabama veterinary board went after nonprofit spay-neuter clinics. Its members came from lists written by the state association.⁴It denied permits. It pushed rules and bills to shrink the clinics. It brought charges against two of their veterinarians.¹⁰It convicted Dr. William Weber at a hearing run by its own vice president.¹¹It convicted Dr. Margaret Ferrell on three charges after an independent judge found her not guilty of all of them.¹²One clinic closed in fear. The campaign ended in 2017 only because the ASPCA prepared to sue.¹³No law was ever changed.

Charge three: they kept a thirty-four-year-old ban and killed every repair

Since January 1, 1992, Texas law has said that a shelter veterinarian "may not perform nonemergency veterinary services other than sterilization" on a pet that has an owner. The only exception is an owner who is "indigent." The law never says what that word means.¹⁴In 2023 a repair bill passed the Texas House 108 to 33.¹⁵The Texas Veterinary Medical Association told its members that families at 80 percent of the local median income were not "truly in need of subsidized veterinary care."¹⁶The bill died in a Senate committee.¹⁷The 2025 version never got a hearing.¹⁸

Charge four: they forced income tests on charities without passing any law

In Idaho the state association got a signed agreement. It limits the Idaho Humane Society's care to families below 80 percent of county median income.¹⁹ In Utah the state association got a county shelter to drop most public services after one meeting.² In New Jersey it backed a bill to limit charities to people on public assistance.¹⁹ In South Carolina its legislative chair wrote a bill demanding pay stubs and Medicaid cards at the clinic door.¹⁹

Charge five: the national association built the machine

The AVMA's written policy on nonprofit clinics "encourages means testing to determine eligibility for services."^{2,20} Its 2014 Public Policy Symposium ran a session on how private veterinarians should answer "unfair competition from nonprofits and government agencies." South Carolina and Utah leaders taught the room what worked.² Its state advocacy office sent "over 800 legislative and regulatory alerts" to the state chapters in 2023 alone. It tracked the Texas repair bill. It tracked a Virginia bill to cap the price of a rabies shot.²¹ Its model law tells states to pick board members from the state association's list.³

THE SCOREBOARD

NAVEC found 19 documented moves against charity care between 2011 and 2023. All were made by state associations or by boards run by their members. Twelve succeeded. Five were defeated. Two, the Alabama convictions, were reversed years later by settlement. In none of the 19 did the club prove that a charity clinic had harmed an animal or taken a paying client from a private practice. No independent judge, regulator, or study ever accepted that claim. The federal agency that looked found the opposite.²² A national study found the opposite.²³

A club that must hide its rule inside a drug-label bill knows the rule cannot survive daylight. A board that must overrule its own judge knows the charges cannot survive a fair hearing. That is the case. The rest of this report is the evidence.

PART II

Who the players are

This chapter is a guide to the names you will meet. Readers who know the field can skip to Part III.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)

The national trade association for veterinarians. It was founded in 1863 and is based in Schaumburg, Illinois. It speaks for veterinarians to Congress and to federal agencies. Through its state advocacy office, it speaks to all fifty state legislatures.²¹ It writes the Model Veterinary Practice Act, a sample state law.³ It publishes its own policies, including one on nonprofit clinics.²⁰

State veterinary medical associations (state VMAs)

Each state has one. In this report you will meet the Alabama Veterinary Medical Association (ALVMA), the South Carolina Association of Veterinarians (SCAV), the Texas Veterinary Medical Association (TVMA), the Idaho VMA, the Utah VMA, the New Jersey VMA (NJVMA), and the Virginia VMA (VVMA). Each is a separate corporation. Each seats delegates in the AVMA House of Delegates. Each can nominate the AVMA's district directors.¹ This report calls them chapters because that is how they behave.

The AVMA House of Delegates

The AVMA's policy-making body. The state associations send the delegates. It votes on AVMA policies and on the Model Veterinary Practice Act, most recently revising that model in July 2025.²⁴

State veterinary boards

Government agencies, one per state. They license veterinarians and inspect clinics. They can fine, suspend, or revoke a license. Members are usually practicing veterinarians named by the governor. The AVMA model law asks "the state veterinary medical association to forward names of potential well-qualified nominees to the Governor."³ In Alabama the state association "provides the governor with three names for nomination to the board of which the governor chooses one." In 2013 it began requiring association membership to be considered at all.⁴ The Alabama board in this report is the Alabama State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (ASBVME). The Texas board is the Texas Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (TBVME).

Charity, nonprofit, and shelter clinics

Clinics run by humane societies, rescue groups, or stand-alone charities. Many are high-volume spay-neuter clinics. They sterilize dozens of animals a day at low prices. Some offer vaccines, parasite treatment, and basic care. Under federal tax law they are 501(c)(3) organizations. They have no owners and pay no income tax. In return they must serve a public purpose.

Means testing

Making a family prove it is poor before a clinic may help it. This report records five such lines. Texas says "indigent" and never defines it. A New Jersey bill said public-assistance recipients only. The narrowed Texas repair said 50 percent of area median income. Idaho says 80 percent of county median income. A South Carolina bill demanded "proof of need" such as pay stubs. The AVMA's policy endorses the practice.²

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

The federal agency that protects competition and consumers. In 2012 its staff studied the Alabama fight and wrote to the Alabama House.²²

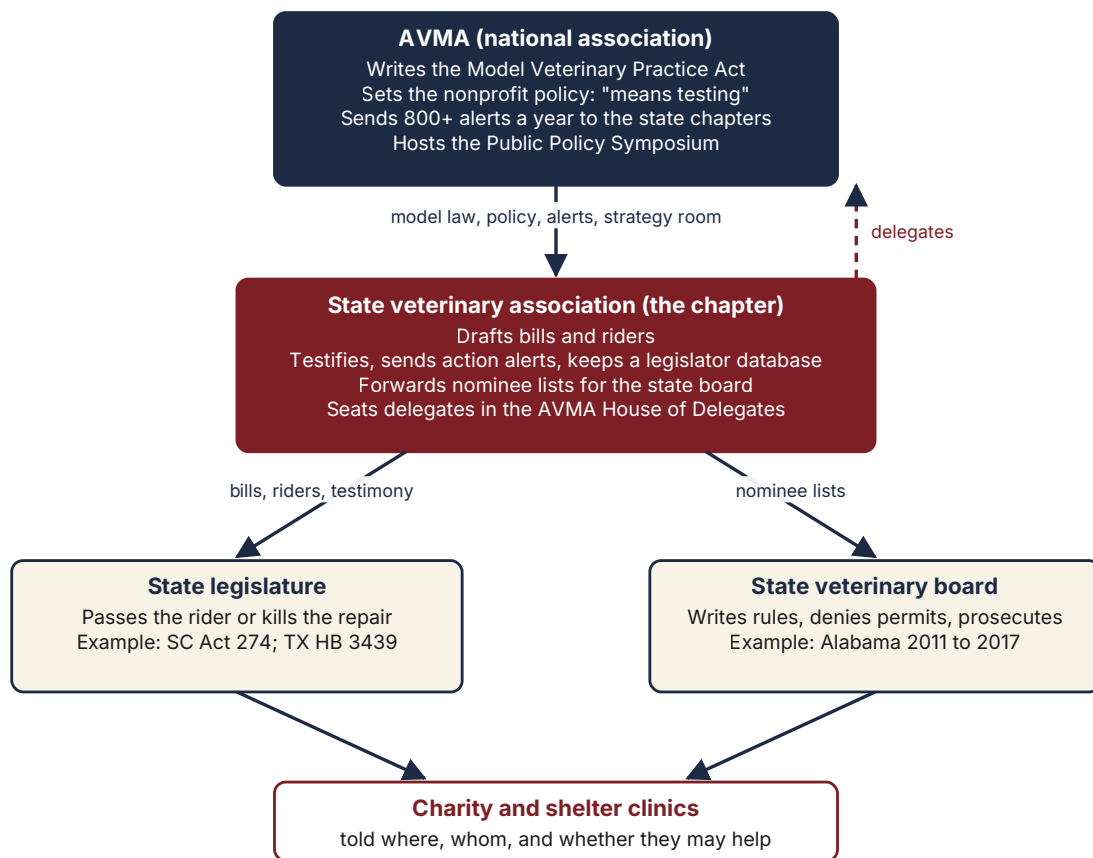


Figure 1. The machine. The national association supplies the model law, the policy, the alerts, and the planning room. The state chapter supplies the bills, the testimony, and the names for the board. The legislature and the board then do the work. The arrows run in one direction, except the delegates who run back up. Sources: AVMA bylaws; Model Veterinary Practice Act; AVMA 2023 State Legislative Update; JAVMA News, Nov. 1, 2014.

PART III

How the chapters coordinate

When the club is cornered, it says each state association acts alone. The record shows six channels that connect them. Every one is documented in the AVMA's own publications.

Channel one: the policy

The AVMA keeps a written policy. Its title is "Delivery of veterinary services by not-for-profit/tax-exempt organizations." It says nonprofits must follow state rules on "ownership of veterinary practices by nonveterinarians." That is the exact rule the Alabama board used against the clinics. The policy also endorses means testing "where applicable."²⁰ The AVMA's own news service summed it up in one line: "The policy encourages means testing to determine eligibility for ser-

vices."²A reporter asked the AVMA's director of state relations, Adrian Hochstadt, about means testing. He said: "We have different views in the profession about that."²⁵The policy did not wait for the views to settle.

Channel two: the planning room

The AVMA holds a Public Policy Symposium. It calls it a forum for state association leaders "to learn and strategize about public policy."²The September 2014 symposium met in Rosemont, Illinois. One session was about how private veterinarians should respond to "unfair competition from nonprofits and government agencies."²Two chapters presented. Dr. Patricia Hill is the legislative chair of the South Carolina Association of Veterinarians. She told the room that "In 2013, SCAV drafted state legislation to limit the scope of services by nonprofits." It met "incredibly vocal and strong opposition." So the association changed tactics. It "caught state legislators between sessions." It found "a senior state senator who has private practitioners in his family."²Dr. Drew Allen is the legislative chair of the Utah VMA. He explained how his association got a county shelter to cut its public services without any bill at all.²The room learned both lessons. Within two years South Carolina had its rider, Idaho had its income cap, and New Jersey had its bill.

Channel three: the alert system

The AVMA's Division of State Advocacy tracks bills in all fifty states. In 2023 it "sent over 800 legislative and regulatory alerts" to state and allied associations.²¹Its 2023 annual report lists the Texas shelter-care repair bill (HB 3439) among the bills it followed. It lists the Virginia rabies-price bill (HB 1468) too. The same report records that the AVMA joined the Arkansas VMA to oppose a technician bill that year. So the national office does step into state fights when it chooses.²¹The chapters do not have to find these bills. The alerts find them.

Channel four: the model law

The Model Veterinary Practice Act is the AVMA's template for state licensing law. When it was revised in 2003, the drafts went to "executive directors of state veterinary medical associations."²⁶The Ohio VMA's executive director put it plainly: "When we rewrote our practice act, we used the AVMA's model extensively."²⁷The model asks governors to pick board members from the state association's list.³That is how private-practice majorities end up running public boards.

Channel five: the delegates

Each state association seats delegates in the AVMA House of Delegates. Each nominates AVMA district directors.¹The people who run the chapters are the people who vote the national policy. There is no outside seat at either table. No shelter veterinarian. No charity. No pet owner. No public member.

Channel six: the trade press

The AVMA's own news service covered the South Carolina, Idaho, New Jersey, and Alabama fights as one story. The headline was "Need, fairness debated in nonprofit roles."¹⁹ The chapters read about each other's methods in the national association's magazine.

WHAT THE AVMA HAS NOT PUBLISHED

The AVMA has not published which of its 800 alerts went to which bills. It has not published who attended the 2014 "unfair competition" session, or what was said there beyond what its reporter printed. It has not published any instruction it sent to a chapter about charity care. It does publish the policy, the symposium, the model law, and the alert count. That is enough to establish the structure. What it withholds is for the AVMA to explain. This report invites it to do so.

Table 1. Six documented channels between the national association and the state chapters

Channel	What the record shows	Source
Written policy	Nonprofits must follow nonveterinarian-ownership rules; means testing endorsed "where applicable"	AVMA policy page ²⁰
Public Policy Symposium	2014 session on "unfair competition from nonprofits"; SCAV and Utah VMA presented their methods	JAVMA News, Nov. 2014 ²
State advocacy alerts	"Over 800" alerts in 2023; tracked TX HB 3439 and VA HB 1468	AVMA 2023 report ²¹
Model Veterinary Practice Act	Drafts sent to state executive directors; state association nominates board members	AVMA, JAVMA 2003, VIN ^{3,26,27}
House of Delegates	State associations seat delegates and nominate AVMA directors	AVMA bylaws ¹
Joint action	AVMA and Arkansas VMA jointly opposed a 2023 technician bill	AVMA 2023 report ²¹

South Carolina: the rule they hid in a drug-label bill

This is the cleanest case in the country, because every step is in the legislative journals and the governor wrote down exactly what happened.

The idea: keep charity out of sight

The South Carolina Association of Veterinarians (SCAV) first tried the direct route. In 2013 it drafted a bill to limit what nonprofits could do, and dropped it after what its own legislative chair called "incredibly vocal and strong opposition."²In 2015 it came back with S 687. That bill would have let nonprofits treat owned pets only if the owner proved need. It would have banned shelter-linked mobile clinics within two miles of a private practice in the state's twenty-four poorer counties. In the other twenty-two counties the ban was one mile.¹⁹The AVMA's news service reported that SCAV's legislative chair, Dr. Patricia Hill, "was involved in writing the legislation."¹⁹S 687 did not pass.

The vehicle: S 980

On January 13, 2016, Senators Sheheen and McElveen introduced S. 980. It had two sections. It required prescription drugs dispensed to a pet owner to carry a proper label, and it set a penalty. Nothing else.⁶The Senate Agriculture committee reported it favorably in March. The Senate amended it on April 26, still two sections, still about labels, and passed it 40 to 0 on April 27.^{28,7}

The House received it on April 28 and the House Agriculture committee reported it favorably on May 25.²⁹Then, on June 1, 2016, on the House floor, the committee offered Amendment No. 1: "striking all after the enacting words and inserting" a new bill.⁸The new bill put every private animal shelter that provides veterinary care under the state veterinary board. It required shelters to register with the board. It created new record-keeping duties. And it rewrote the mobile-clinic law to add one sentence:

"A mobile practice affiliated with, operated by, or supported by a public or private non-profit animal shelter is prohibited from operating within eyesight of the nearest privately owned veterinarian practice."

S.C. Code § 40-69-295(B), as inserted by House Amendment No. 1 to S. 980, June 1, 2016, and enacted by Act 274.^{8,9}

The same amendment changed the state's "No More Homeless Pets" license-plate fund. Now a charity asking for reimbursement for spay-neuter surgeries must first turn over "the name and address of each person who brought the animal to the program."^{8,9}Private clinics file no such list. Rep. Ott explained the amendment. It was adopted. Rep. Ott then offered Amendment No. 3. It ad-

ded a study committee and removed the criminal penalty from the original label section. It was adopted too. The House passed the rebuilt bill 105 to 8 that afternoon.⁸The eight who voted no were Representatives Chumley, Gilliard, Limehouse, McCoy, Putnam, G. M. Smith, Stavrinakis, and Thayer.⁸The next morning, June 2, the Senate concurred 38 to 4 and the bill was ratified.⁷The bill's official summary still reads "Veterinarians and prescription drugs."²⁹

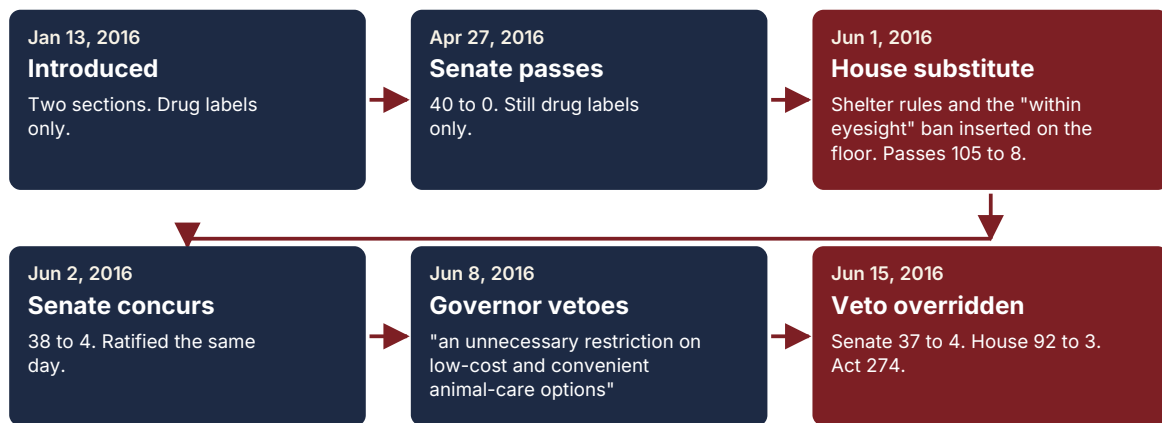


Figure 2. From a label bill to a charity ban in twenty days. The substitute was inserted on June 1, passed the same day, and concurred in the next morning. Sources: S. 980 bill history and versions; House Journal, June 1, 2016; vote history.

The veto

Governor Nikki Haley vetoed the bill on June 8, 2016. Her message said the bill contained some reforms she admired, and then named the problem. She wrote that she was vetoing it because it "places an unnecessary restriction on low-cost and convenient animal-care options." She wrote that "pro-veterinary groups tacked this arbitrary and obstructionist provision" onto the bill. She wrote that "Allowing it to become law would be an undue economic protection measure for private veterinarians," and she reminded the legislature that "South Carolina is a state that encourages homeless pet adoption."⁵

On June 15, 2016, the Senate overrode her 37 to 4 and the House 92 to 3. The act took effect that day as Act 274.^{7,29}

What the record proves

- The restriction was never in the bill the Senate voted on. It arrived as a floor substitute the day before final passage.^{28,8}
- The idea came from the state association. Its legislative chair wrote the 2015 distance bill; the 2016 rider carried the same idea with "eyesight" in place of miles.^{19,8}
- The governor, who had the full record in front of her, attributed the rider to "pro-veterinary groups" and called it economic protection.⁵
- The club's reply was not an argument. It was a veto override with 129 of 136 votes.⁷

"Within eyesight" is the whole campaign in two words. The law does not say a charity's mobile clinic is unsafe. It says the clinic may help the poor, so long as the private practice does not have to watch.

Table 2. South Carolina ledger

Date	Action	Vote or outcome
2013	SCAV drafts a bill limiting nonprofit services; shelved under opposition ²	Failed
Sept. 2014	SCAV presents its strategy at the AVMA Public Policy Symposium ²	Shared nationally
2015	S 687: two-mile and one-mile bans; proof of need ¹⁹	Failed
Jan. 13, 2016	S. 980 introduced: drug labels only, two sections ⁶	
Apr. 27, 2016	Senate passes the label bill ⁷	40 to 0
June 1, 2016	House committee substitute inserts shelter rules and the "eyesight" ban; Rep. Ott's second amendment adds a study committee ⁸	105 to 8
June 2, 2016	Senate concurs; ratified as R 231 ⁷	38 to 4
June 8, 2016	Gov. Haley vetoes: "an undue economic protection measure for private veterinarians" ⁵	Vetoed
June 15, 2016	Veto overridden; Act 274 effective ⁷	37 to 4; 92 to 3

PART V · CHARGE TWO

Alabama: the board that prosecuted the surgeons

In South Carolina the club used the legislature. In Alabama it used something more dangerous. It used a government board with the power to take away a license. That board was run by private-practice veterinarians chosen from the state association's lists.

Who sat on the board

The Alabama Veterinary Medical Association (ALVMA) "provides the governor with three names for nomination to the board of which the governor chooses one." In 2013 the association began requiring that nominees be association members.⁴The board's president during the campaign, Dr. Robert Pitman of Athens, ran a private practice about 25 miles from the North Alabama Spay/Neuter Clinic in Huntsville.³⁰Its vice president, Dr. Ronald Welch of Wetumpka, was described by the trade press as an "active supporter" of restricting the clinics.⁴Dr. Pitman warned that if nonprofits

could own clinics, so could "rescue groups, volunteer fire departments, wild turkey federations, bingo clubs."³⁰ A letter circulated among veterinarians by clinic opponents said the clinics' supporters suffered from "vet envy."¹²

2011: the first closure

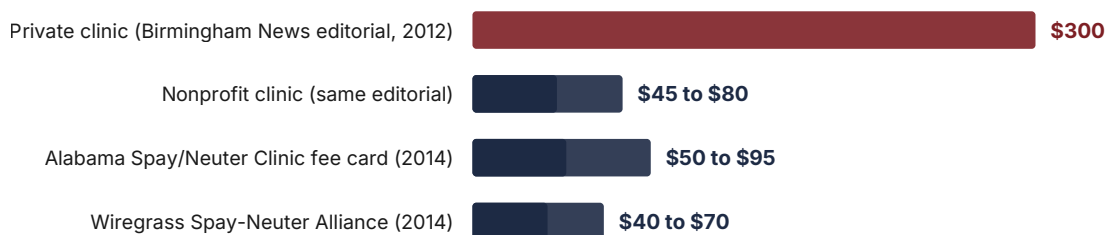
In 2011 the board served the Alabama Spay/Neuter Clinic in Birmingham with a cease-and-desist order, saying a veterinarian had to own it.³⁰ The same year it denied the North Alabama Spay/Neuter Clinic in Huntsville a permit during an ownership change. The clinic closed in March 2011 and did not reopen until January 2012.³⁰ Before the campaign the board had inspected and permitted four nonprofit clinics; now it treated their existence as a violation.²²

2012: the legislature votes yes, and the bill dies anyway

Rep. Patricia Todd of Birmingham filed HB 156 to let a veterinarian work for a nonprofit spay-neuter clinic, with board inspection, a supervising veterinarian, and a board permit. It passed the House 73 to 23 and the Senate 27 to 3.³¹ It then went to a conference committee and never came out. The reason given was that "the speaker wouldn't bring it out of the basket."³⁰

While the bill was pending, the staff of the Federal Trade Commission studied it. On April 26, 2012, with the Commission's approval, FTC staff wrote to the Alabama House in support of HB 156. The letter found that the bill's safeguards meant the quality of care "is the same, regardless of whether a facility is owned by a veterinarian or a 501(c)(3) nonprofit." It warned that ownership restrictions "can act as barriers to entry by new competitors, and consumers may end up paying higher prices."²² The Birmingham News reported the price gap the FTC was talking about: "\$300 or more" to sterilize an animal at a private clinic, "about \$45 to \$80" at a nonprofit.³¹

Cost of sterilizing one animal, Alabama, 2012 to 2014 (dollars)



Sources: dvm360, "Spay-neuter bill passes Alabama Legislature" (quoting the Birmingham News); Cullman Times, 2014; Dothan Eagle, 20

Figure 3. The price gap. A private sterilization cost about four to six times what a charity clinic charged. The charity's clients were families who could pay the second number and not the first. Sources: Birmingham News editorial as quoted by dvm360 (2012); Cullman Times (2014); Dothan Eagle (2014).

October 2012: the rule the public shouted down

The board then tried a rule. It proposed to bar anyone who was not a veterinarian from owning veterinary equipment. That would have ended the nonprofit clinics without a vote of the legislature. At the October 10, 2012 hearing, eighteen people spoke. All eighteen supported the clinics. After the board's own attorney advised against the rule, the board voted it down unanimously.^{32,33}

2013: the counter-bill, the lawsuit, and the subpoena

By 2013 the state association was embarrassed. Its president, Dr. William Allen, called the fight a "PR nightmare." The association broke with the board and backed a legalizing bill, HB 188. It passed the House 79 to 14 and died in the Senate.^{10,34} The board's answer was a bill of its own: SB 25. Its sponsor was Sen. Paul Bussman, a practicing dentist. SB 25 would have limited the clinics to sterilization only. It would have barred their veterinarians from possessing any drug or equipment "not related to the spay-neuter process." That meant no rabies vaccine and no flea treatment. The board endorsed it unanimously. So did a new group, the Alabama Veterinary Practice Owners Association, formed in 2012 to fight HB 156 and led by Dr. Buddy Bruce of Opelika.^{10,35} It failed.

In June 2013, the board president, Dr. Pitman, sued the state association itself for "conduct not in the interest of members." Governor Bentley froze all appointments to the board until the suit ended.⁴ On August 7, 2013, the board subpoenaed Dr. William Weber's clinic records going back to 2007, with three days' notice.⁴ On September 26, 2013, a political action committee called the Political Animal PAC gave \$10,000 to Sen. Bussman. The PAC says it was formed "to protect and promote the practice of veterinary medicine, and its owners, in the state of Alabama." He received more than \$14,000 from veterinarians in all.³⁶

Contributions to Sen. Paul Bussman from veterinarians before he blocked HB 141 (2014)



The PAC says it exists "to protect and promote the practice of veterinary medicine, and its owners, in the state of Alabama." Total reported: more than \$14,000. The bill had already passed the House 58-37 and cleared the Senate Health Committee 8-

Source: Cullman Times, "Spay-neuter clinics lose bid to gain legitimacy," 2014.

Figure 4. The check and the filibuster. The PAC's money arrived in September 2013. Sen. Bussman's filibuster threat killed the repair bill in the last days of the 2014 session. Source: Cullman Times, 2014.

2014: the year the campaign did its damage

HB 141 was the next repair bill. It passed the House 58 to 37 on February 25, 2014. It cleared the Senate Health Committee 8 to 4. Sen. Bussman was one of the four no votes.^{37,38} On the last day of the session Sen. Bussman threatened a filibuster. The bill was pulled. He told AL.com that he blocked it because the board had legal action pending against the clinics.³⁶ The state association, which had endorsed the bill in 2013, reversed itself in 2014.³⁵

In April 2014 the board ordered the Shelby Humane Society's vaccine clinic to give rabies shots only, after a local veterinarian complained of "unfair competition."³⁵ On April 23, 2014, the North Alabama Spay/Neuter Clinic in Huntsville closed for good. In 28 months it had sterilized 8,882 animals, about 27 to 30 a day. Its veterinarian, Dr. Joy Baird, wrote: "I am unwilling to endure what poor Dr. Weber has been put through by the ASBVME."^{39,35}

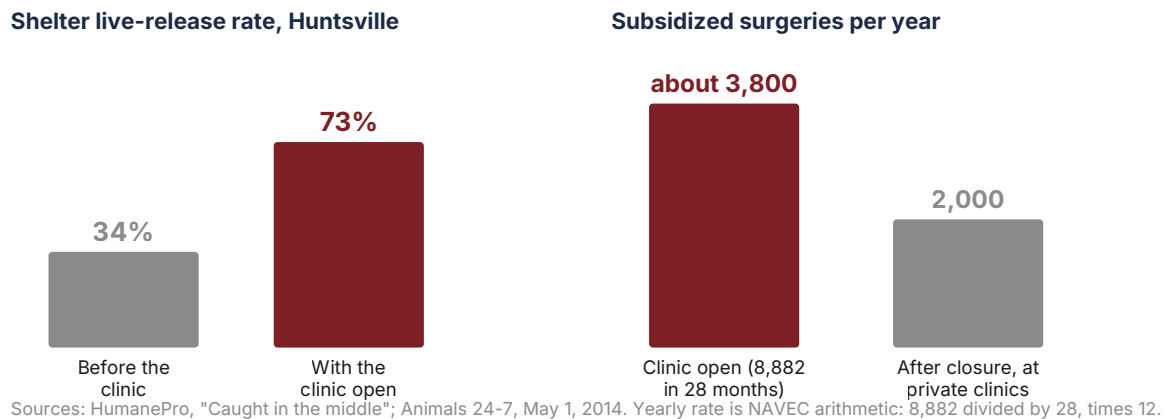


Figure 5. What one clinic did, and what closing it cost. While the Huntsville clinic was open, the local shelter's live-release rate rose from 34 percent to 73 percent. After it closed, private clinics performed about 2,000 subsidized surgeries a year, half the number. Source: HumanePro, 'Caught in the middle.'

In August 2014 the board tried Dr. Weber. He was the owner of record of the Birmingham clinic, which performed up to 14,000 surgeries a year. The board did not use an independent judge. According to the trade press, it "opted not to use an independent judge to run the hearing, but left it to its vice president, Sam Edit, DVM."¹¹ The board found Dr. Weber guilty on five charges, revoked his license for a year, and fined him \$1,000 per charge. He appealed to the circuit court in Montgomery.¹¹ The ASPCA filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of his appeal.¹³

2015: the board overrules its own judge

The board then charged Dr. Margaret Ferrell, the Birmingham clinic's lead surgeon, with 29 counts. This time an independent administrative law judge, James Jerry Wood, heard the case. He recommended that she be found not guilty on every charge.^{40,41} Dr. Phillip Bushby of Mississippi State University, a national authority on spay-neuter surgery, testified that she was among the best surgeons he had seen in 42 years.¹² None of the board's witnesses had watched her operate. Judge Wood wrote that "The real question is whether a non-profit such as Alabama Spay/Neuter Clinic, which has no equity owners, can lawfully operate as it does."¹² In January 2015 the board found her guilty on three of the 29 charges anyway.¹²

The same year the legislature considered a compromise, HB 563, which would have confined the clinics to sterilization, rabies shots, and parasite care. It was indefinitely postponed on June 3, 2015.^{42,39}

2016 to 2017: how it ended

Governor Bentley changed the board instead of the law. He appointed Dr. Mickey Golden, a humane society board member, in place of Dr. Welch. In 2016 he appointed Dr. Ferrell herself to the board that had prosecuted her.^{43,44} In 2017, with both appeals still pending, the ASPCA prepared a lawsuit on behalf of the Birmingham clinic. Facing it, "the Board finally agreed to settle the appeals, dismiss the charges against the veterinarians, and spell out an acceptable corporate structure for non-profit clinics in the state."¹³

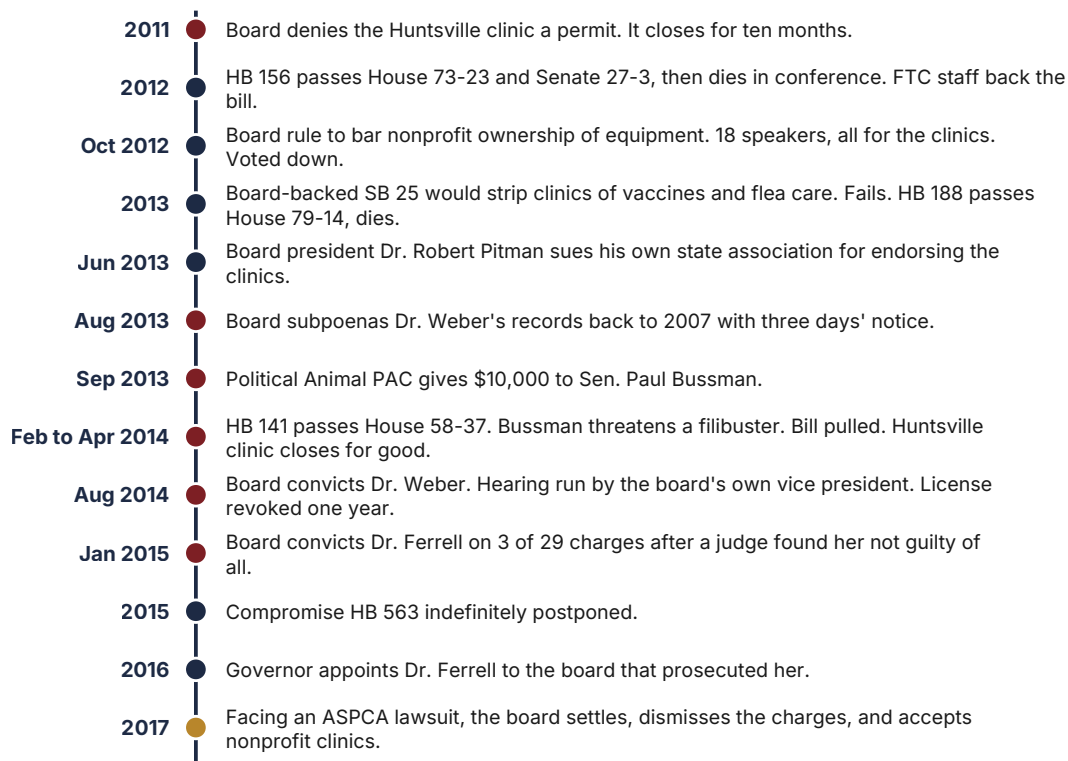


Figure 6. Six years, two prosecutions, one closed clinic, and no law. The Alabama campaign ran from a denied permit in 2011 to a settlement in 2017. Maroon dots are the board's or its allies' moves; navy dots are the public's answers; gold is the end. Sources: as cited in the text.

What the record proves

- The board that prosecuted the charities was staffed from the state association's lists, led by a private-practice owner with a clinic 25 miles from one of the targets.^{4,30}
- Every time the public got a vote, the clinics won: 73 to 23, 27 to 3, 79 to 14, 58 to 37, 8 to 4, and 18 speakers to none. Every time the decision moved to a committee basket, a filibuster threat, or the board's own hearing room, the clinics lost.
- The board's quality case failed in front of the only independent judge who heard it.⁴⁰
- The federal competition agency found the clinics' safeguards adequate and the restrictions harmful to consumers.²²

- The board surrendered only when a lawsuit was ready to be filed.¹³

A board that will not use an independent judge, and overrules the one it is forced to use, is not regulating. It is punishing. The people it punished were surgeons whose only offense was working for a charity.

Table 3. Alabama ledger

Date	Action	Outcome
2011	Board cease-and-desist to the Birmingham clinic; Huntsville clinic denied a permit, closed ten months ³⁰	Restriction imposed
2012	HB 156 passes House 73-23, Senate 27-3; dies in conference ^{31,30}	Repair blocked
Apr. 26, 2012	FTC staff letter supports HB 156 ²²	Evidence against the club
Oct. 10, 2012	Board equipment-ownership rule; 18 speakers for the clinics; voted down ^{32,33}	Attempt defeated
2013	SB 25 (board-backed) fails; HB 188 passes House 79-14, dies ^{10,34}	Defeated / blocked
June 2013	Board president sues the state association; governor freezes appointments ⁴	Pressure
Aug. 7, 2013	Subpoena of Dr. Weber's records, three days' notice ⁴	Prosecution begins
Sept. 26, 2013	Political Animal PAC gives \$10,000 to Sen. Bussman ³⁶	
Feb. to Apr. 2014	HB 141 passes House 58-37, committee 8-4; killed by filibuster threat ^{37,38,36}	Repair blocked
Apr. 2014	Shelby Humane vaccine clinic ordered to rabies only; Huntsville clinic closes ^{35,39}	Restriction imposed
Aug. 2014	Dr. Weber convicted at a hearing run by the board's vice president ¹¹	Won, later reversed
Jan. 2015	Dr. Ferrell convicted on 3 of 29 after a not-guilty recommendation ¹²	Won, later reversed
June 2015	Compromise HB 563 indefinitely postponed ⁴²	Status quo kept
2016	Dr. Ferrell appointed to the board ⁴⁴	Board changed
2017	Settlement: charges dismissed, nonprofit structure accepted ¹³	Reversed

Texas: the thirty-four-year ban and the repair they killed

The law

Section 828.012(b) of the Texas Health and Safety Code says:

"A veterinarian employed by a releasing agency may not perform nonemergency veterinary services other than sterilization on an animal that the releasing agency knows or should know has an owner. However, this subsection does not prevent a veterinarian employed by a releasing agency from performing veterinary services on an animal whose owner is indigent."

Texas Health and Safety Code § 828.012(b). Added by Acts 1991, effective January 1, 1992; amended 2001 and 2005.¹⁴

A "releasing agency" is a shelter or humane society. The section was added in 1991 and took effect on January 1, 1992. The Legislature touched it in 2001 and again in 2005. In 2005 it amended subsection (a) and added subsection (c). It left the owned-animal ban in subsection (b) exactly as it was.⁴⁵ The word "indigent" has never been defined. So a shelter veterinarian who treats a poor family's dog is guessing about the law. Most do not guess. They refuse.¹⁶ The group Human Animal Support Services says Texas is the only remaining state that explicitly forbids shelter veterinarians from treating owned pets. That is its description. NAVEC found no state with a broader ban in its statutes.¹⁶

The association's view of charities

The Texas Veterinary Medical Association (TVMA) wrote its position into its 2018 Strategic Plan. Under the heading "Threats," it lists: "Encroachment on practice of veterinary medicine (by nonprofits, telemedicine, etc.)."⁴⁶ The association tracks about 120 bills a session. It takes official positions on 30 or more.⁴⁷ In its own planning document, nonprofits that help poor families are a threat.

2023: the repair passes the House and dies in silence

Rep. Ann Johnson of Houston filed HB 3439. As filed, it let a shelter veterinarian treat an owned pet if the family's income was "not more than 80 percent of the median income for the area," or below the federal poverty level. The owner had to give "evidence to establish the owner qualifies."⁴⁸ Rep. Johnson explained why: "about 40% of the people releasing and surrendering their animals are doing so because they can't afford" care.⁴⁹ The House passed it 103 to 39 on May 4, 2023. It passed it a final time, 108 to 33, on May 5.¹⁵

On May 22, 2023, TVMA sent its members an action alert opposing the bill. It said a family at 80 percent of area median income was not "truly in need of subsidized veterinary care." It called the bill's self-attestation of income a "loophole."¹⁶ The AVMA's state advocacy office tracked the bill all season.²¹ HB 3439 died in the Senate Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee without a vote.¹⁷

2025: the narrowed repair gets no hearing

Rep. Johnson tried again with HB 1614. The new bill gave the association what it had asked for. The income line dropped to 50 percent of area median income. Shelters would have to keep income records "on request of the State Board" of Veterinary Medical Examiners.⁵⁰ It was referred to committee and never got a hearing.¹⁸ The association did not have to testify. Silence was enough.

What the record proves

- Texas has banned shelter veterinarians from most care for owned pets for thirty-four years, with a means test ("indigent") that no one has ever defined.¹⁴
- The state association names nonprofits as a "threat" in its own plan.⁴⁶
- When the House voted 108 to 33 to let charities help families at 80 percent of median income, the association told its members those families were not truly in need, and the bill died in a Senate committee.^{15,16,17}
- When the sponsor cut the line in half and added inspection, the bill did not even get a hearing.^{50,18}

The Texas association did not argue that treating a poor family's dog is dangerous. It argued that the family was not poor enough. There is no veterinary expertise in that sentence. There is only a competitor deciding who may be helped.

Table 4. Texas ledger

Date	Action	Outcome
Jan. 1, 1992	Section 828.012 takes effect: shelter veterinarians may not treat owned pets except sterilization or "indigent" owners ¹⁴	Ban in force
2005	SB 248 amends subsections (a) and (c); the ban in (b) left untouched ⁴⁵	Ban kept
2018	TVMA Strategic Plan lists "non-profits" under "Threats" ⁴⁶	Intent documented
2019	HB 3806 filed; as introduced it would have extended the ban to any nonprofit while adding vaccines and defining "indigent" by enrollment in public programs; died ⁵¹	No change
May 4 to 5, 2023	HB 3439 (80% of area median income) passes House 103-39, then 108-33 ¹⁵	

Date	Action	Outcome
May 22, 2023	TVMA action alert: families at 80% not "truly in need" ¹⁶	
May 2023	HB 3439 dies in Senate committee ¹⁷	Repair blocked
2025	HB 1614 (50% of median, records on request) referred, no hearing ¹⁸	Repair blocked

PART VII · CHARGE FOUR

Idaho, Utah, New Jersey, Virginia: income tests without a law

The lesson the 2014 symposium taught was that a chapter does not need a statute. It needs a meeting. These four cases come almost entirely from the AVMA's own news reporting.

Idaho: the agreement signed by two legislators

The Idaho VMA first sought legislation against the Idaho Humane Society's public clinic. Then, in April 2015, it reached an agreement "signed by two state representatives." The agreement limits the humane society's wellness care, vaccines, and dental care to owners below 80 percent of county median income.¹⁹The humane society applies the cap at 75 percent, which in Ada and Canyon counties was about \$45,000 a year for a family.¹⁹The association's executive director, Vicki Smith, explained the harm to her members this way: private veterinarians lose "because people feel good about buying services from a nonprofit."¹⁹The humane society's chief executive, Dr. Jeff Rosenthal, reported "a substantial decline in income" after the cap.¹⁹No legislator voted. No board ruled. A family earning \$46,000 lost its clinic because two representatives signed a paper the association wrote.

Utah: one meeting

In 2014 the Utah VMA considered legislation over Salt Lake County Animal Services' subsidized care for the public. Its legislative chair, Dr. Drew Allen, told the AVMA symposium that after a meeting with the counties, "the new director agreed to scale back services for the public other than vaccinations."²No bill was needed.

New Jersey: public assistance only

The New Jersey VMA "backed legislation that was introduced and withdrawn" that would have limited nonprofit clinics to clients on public assistance. Its executive director, Richard Alampi, said nonprofits caused "financial pain" to his members.¹⁹The bill was withdrawn, but the chapter's position was recorded by the national association's own magazine.

Virginia: the twenty-dollar rabies shot

In 2023 Virginia's HB 1468 would have capped the price of a rabies vaccination at \$20. The AVMA's state advocacy report records that it was "opposed by the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association" and "Failed sine die," meaning it died when the session ended.²¹ A rabies shot protects people as well as animals. The chapter's objection was not to the shot. It was to the price.

Who may be helped, by rule. Lower bar means fewer families qualify.

Texas law since 1992: owner must be "indigent" (never defined)

■ **no line; most shelters give no care**

New Jersey bill, 2016 (NJVMA-backed): public-assistance recipients only

■ **poorest only**

Texas repair as narrowed, 2023 and 2025: 50% of area median income, records on request

■ **50%**

Idaho VMA agreement, 2015: 80% of county median (applied at 75%)

■ **75% to 80%**

Texas repair as filed, 2023: 80% of area median (TVMA: not "truly in need")

■ **80%**

AVMA national policy: means testing "where applicable"

■ **the national rule**

Sources: Texas HSC 828.012(b); JAVMA News 2016; HB 3439 and HB 1614 texts; HASS; AVMA policy page. Bars show the income ceiling

Figure 7. The income lines drawn against charity care. Every line was drawn by a state association, a legislature acting on one, or the national policy. None was drawn by a public health authority. Sources: as listed on the figure.

What the record proves

- Three of the four results were obtained with no vote by any elected body.^{19,2}
- The stated harm, in the associations' own words, was lost business: people "feel good about buying services from a nonprofit"; nonprofits cause "financial pain."¹⁹
- The national policy supplied the tool: means testing "where applicable."²⁰

An income cap on charity is a price floor for private practice. The chapters did not pretend otherwise. They said so in the national association's magazine.

PART VIII

The registers: riders, insiders, and the people who resisted

Register A: restrictions attached to unrelated or must-pass bills

NAVEC searched for every documented instance in which a restriction on charity veterinary care rode on a bill about something else. The standard for this register is a primary record: a bill history, a journal, or a veto message.

Table 5. Vehicle register

Bill	Original subject	What was attached, when, and by whom	Outcome
South Carolina S. 980 (2016), Act 274	Labels on animal prescription drugs; two sections ⁶	House committee substitute on June 1, 2016, the day before final passage: shelter regulation, shelter registration, a client name-and-address list for charity reimbursements, and the "within eyesight" mobile-clinic ban; explained by Rep. Ott; attributed by the governor to "pro-veterinary groups" ^{8,5}	Enacted over veto
Alabama SB 25 (2013)	Filed as a "spay-neuter clinic" bill	Not a rider but a substitute: labeled a clinic bill, its text stripped clinics of vaccines, parasite care, and unrelated equipment; endorsed by the board and the practice-owners' group ¹⁰	Failed
Texas SB 248 (2005)	Nonsurgical sterilization for shelters	No rider. NAVEC checked the Senate analysis: the 2005 bill amended subsections (a) and (c) of § 828.012 and left the owned-animal ban in (b) untouched. Recorded here so no one repeats the error of calling 2005 the ban's origin ⁴⁵	Not a rider

One confirmed rider is one more than a legitimate public-safety rule should ever need. The South Carolina record shows the method in full: pass a harmless bill through one chamber, substitute the real bill in the other on the eve of adjournment, and concur the next morning before anyone outside the room has read it.

Register B: insiders with documented roles

This register names people only where a primary record or reputable press documents the role. Holding two seats at once is noted where documented.

Table 6. Insider register

Person	Positions held	Documented action
Dr. Robert Pitman, Athens, Alabama	President, Alabama State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners; private practice owner 25 miles from the Huntsville clinic; ALVMA member ^{30,4}	Led the board's campaign; sued the state association in June 2013 for endorsing a legalizing bill; publicly compared nonprofit clinics to "wild turkey federations, bingo clubs" ^{4,30}
Dr. Ronald Welch, Wetumpka, Alabama	Vice president of the Alabama board; ALVMA member; reached the board from the association's nominee list ⁴	Described in the trade press as an "active supporter" of restricting the clinics; later replaced by the governor with a humane-society board member ^{4,43}
Dr. Sam Edit	Vice president of the Alabama board at the time of the Weber hearing ¹¹	Ran the twelve-day disciplinary hearing himself in place of an independent judge ¹¹
Dr. Buddy Bruce, Opelika, Alabama	President, Alabama Veterinary Practice Owners Association, formed in 2012 to fight HB 156 ^{35,10}	Led practice-owner opposition in the 2014 session; the group endorsed SB 25 unanimously ^{35,10}
Sen. Paul Bussman, Cullman, Alabama	State senator; practicing dentist ¹⁰	Sponsored SB 25; voted no in committee on HB 141; received \$10,000 from the Political Animal PAC and more than \$14,000 from veterinarians; killed HB 141 with a filibuster threat ^{36,38}
Rep. David Standridge, Hayden, Alabama	State representative. Animals 24-7, citing the blog Left in Alabama, reported that his son's veterinary clinic sits inside the service area of a nonprofit clinic ³⁵	Argued that the clinics had an "unfair advantage," as reported by Animals 24-7; NAVEC reports the attribution as published and invites correction ³⁵
Dr. Patricia Hill, South Carolina	Legislative chair, South Carolina Association of Veterinarians; small-animal veterinarian ¹⁹	"Was involved in writing" S 687 (two-mile and one-mile bans, proof of need); presented the chapter's strategy at the 2014 AVMA symposium ^{19,2}
Dr. Drew Allen, Salt Lake City	Legislative chair, Utah VMA ²	Obtained a county shelter's agreement to drop public services beyond vaccinations ²
Vicki Smith, Idaho	Executive director, Idaho VMA ¹⁹	Negotiated the 80 percent income cap on the Idaho Humane Society's clinic ¹⁹
Richard Alampi, New Jersey	Executive director, New Jersey VMA ¹⁹	Backed the public-assistance-only bill ¹⁹
Adrian Hochstadt, AVMA	AVMA director of state relations ²⁵	On the national means-testing policy: "We have different views in the profession about that" ²⁵

Register C: the people who resisted, and what it cost them

A fair question is whether anyone inside the system pushed back, and whether they were punished for it. The answer is yes, and yes.

Table 7. Resistance and retaliation register

Who	What they did	What happened to them
Dr. William Weber	Owner of record of the Alabama Spay/Neuter Clinic in Birmingham, up to 14,000 surgeries a year ¹¹	Records subpoenaed with three days' notice; tried before the board's own vice president; license revoked one year; fined; forced to appeal; charges dismissed by settlement in 2017 ^{4,11,13}
Dr. Margaret Ferrell	Lead surgeon at the Birmingham clinic; refused to quit ¹²	Charged on 29 counts; cleared by an independent judge; convicted on three anyway; forced to appeal; charges dismissed in 2017; later appointed to the board itself ^{40,12,44,13}
Dr. Joy Baird	Veterinarian of the North Alabama Spay/Neuter Clinic, Huntsville ³⁹	Closed the clinic rather than face what Dr. Weber faced: "I am unwilling to endure what poor Dr. Weber has been put through by the ASBVME" ³⁹
Shelby Humane Society, Alabama	Ran a low-cost vaccine clinic ³⁵	Ordered by the board to give rabies shots only after a private veterinarian complained of "unfair competition" ³⁵
Alabama Veterinary Medical Association (2013)	Broke with the board and endorsed the legalizing bill HB 188 ¹⁰	Sued by the board's president; reversed its position the next year ^{4,35}
Dr. Jeff Rosenthal and the Idaho Humane Society	Served families of every income ¹⁹	Forced into an income cap; "a substantial decline in income" ¹⁹
Gov. Nikki Haley, South Carolina	Vetoed Act 274 as "an undue economic protection measure" ⁵	Overridden 37 to 4 and 92 to 3 within a week ⁷
Reps. Chumley, Gilliard, Limehouse, McCoy, Putnam, G. M. Smith, Stavrinakis, Thayer (South Carolina)	The eight House votes against the substitute bill on June 1, 2016 ⁸	Outvoted 105 to 8
Rep. Patricia Todd (Alabama) and Rep. Ann Johnson (Texas)	Sponsored the repair bills, year after year ^{31,49}	Bills killed in a conference basket, by filibuster threat, in a Senate committee, and by denial of a hearing
Alyce Addison, board attorney (Alabama)	Advised the board in October 2012 that its equipment rule should not be adopted ³²	No consequence documented. Recorded here to keep the register honest.

Who	What they did	What happened to them
Dr. William Allen and Dr. Kirk Holland, ALVMA presidents	Called the board's campaign a "PR nightmare" (Allen, 2013); said what matters is upholding standards wherever a veterinarian practices (Holland, 2012) ^{10,31}	No consequence documented

Notice the pattern. The people who paid a price were the ones who kept working at a charity. The surgeons, the clinic veterinarian, the humane society. The retaliation did not come from the legislature. It came from the board, through the one weapon the club controls directly: the license.

PART IX

Their reasons, and what the record says

The associations have offered four reasons for restricting charity care. This chapter sets each beside the evidence. It does not present them as a balanced debate, because the record does not.

Table 8. Reasons offered versus the record

What they said	What the record shows
"Unfair competition." A private veterinarian's complaint of "unfair competition" triggered the Shelby Humane order.³⁵The 2014 AVMA session was titled for it.²Idaho's director: people "feel good about buying services from a nonprofit."¹⁹	The only national study built to test whether charity clinics divert private clients found that they serve mostly low-income families whose pets had no regular veterinarian, plus shelter animals and community cats; nearly half the animals had no owner at all.^{23,52}The FTC found that ownership restrictions "can act as barriers to entry by new competitors, and consumers may end up paying higher prices."²²A family that can pay \$45 but not \$300 was never a private clinic's customer.³¹
"Quality of care." The Alabama board charged two surgeons with substandard practice.^{11,12}	The independent judge recommended not guilty on all 29 counts against Dr. Ferrell; a national expert called her among the best surgeons he had seen in 42 years; none of the board's witnesses had watched her operate.^{40,12}The FTC found the bill's safeguards made quality "the same, regardless of whether a facility is owned by a veterinarian or a 501(c)(3) nonprofit."²²The board settled and dismissed every charge.¹³

What they said	What the record shows
"Only the truly needy." TVMA: families at 80 percent of area median income are not "truly in need of subsidized veterinary care."¹⁶ The AVMA policy: means testing "where applicable."²⁰	Eighty percent of area median income is the standard federal definition of a low-income household. In Idaho the cap excluded a family earning about \$46,000.¹⁹ Fifty-two percent of American pet owners skipped needed care in 2025, and 71 percent of them cited cost.⁵³ The associations have never published a study showing that any income line protects an animal.
"Nonprofits are unnecessary" or "tax-advantaged." Opponents argued the clinics operate "tax-free" and take donations.³⁶	Wiregrass Spay-Neuter Alliance performed 32,000 surgeries in five years at \$40 to \$70; one program cut animal surrenders by more than 30 percent in five years.³⁸ While Huntsville's clinic ran, the shelter's live-release rate rose from 34 to 73 percent.³⁹ The ASPCA estimates about 150,000 dogs and cats are euthanized in Alabama shelters every year.¹³ Every charity in America is tax-exempt. The associations object to this one kind.

Animals arriving at 22 nonprofit clinics with no rabies vaccine on record (age 4 months and up)

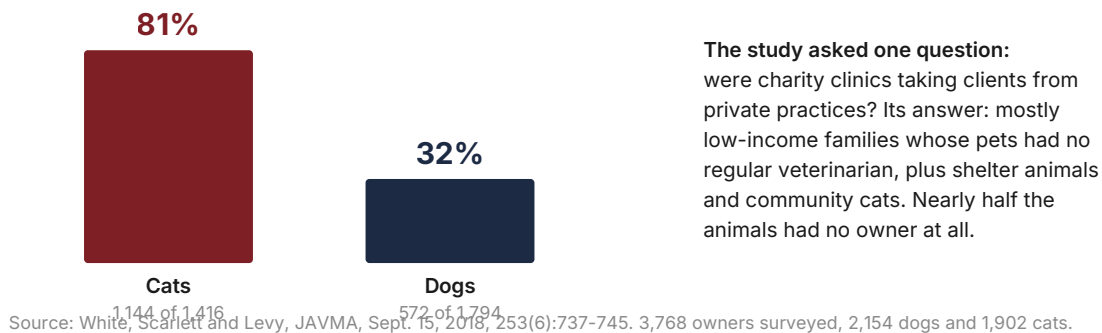


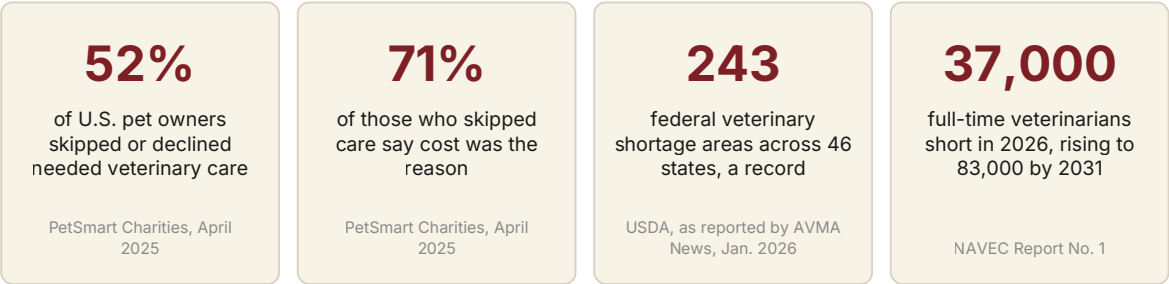
Figure 8. Who the charity clinics actually serve. The 2018 JAVMA study was designed to find out whether nonprofit spay-neuter clinics take clients from private practice. It found the clinics' animals were mostly unvaccinated, mostly from low-income homes, and nearly half unowned. Source: White, Scarlett and Levy, JAVMA 2018.

Strip away the words and every reason is the same reason. The charity's patients were never going to be the private clinic's patients. The club knew it, because its own journal printed the study.

PART X

Who paid

A restriction on charity care does not stop the need. It moves the cost onto the people least able to carry it, and onto their animals.



These are the families a charity clinic exists to serve. They were never on a private practice's appointment book.

Figure 9. The families these rules are aimed at. More than half of American pet owners skipped needed care in 2025, and seven in ten of them said it was the money. Sources: PetSmart Charities (2025); AVMA News on USDA shortage areas (2026); NAVEC Report No. 1 (2026).

Table 9. The harm ledger

Harm	Number	Source
Huntsville clinic closed	8,882 sterilizations in 28 months, about 3,800 a year, ended; 27 to 30 surgeries a day	HumanePro ³⁹
Fewer surgeries after closure	About 2,000 subsidized surgeries a year at private clinics, "half the number"	HumanePro ³⁹
Shelter outcomes while the clinic ran	Live-release rate rose from 34 percent to 73 percent	HumanePro ³⁹
Vaccines withdrawn	Shelby Humane Society's annual vaccines and microchips ended; rabies shots only	Animals 24-7 ³⁵
Rabies gap	81 percent of cats and 32 percent of dogs arriving at nonprofit clinics had no rabies vaccine; these are the animals the club wants turned away	JAVMA 2018 ²³
Idaho income cap	Care cut off above about \$45,000 a year in two counties; "a substantial decline in income" for the humane society	JAVMA News 2016 ¹⁹

Harm	Number	Source
Texas surrenders	About 40 percent of owners surrendering animals cite the cost of care	Rep. Ann Johnson, KXAN ⁴⁹
Alabama euthanasia	About 150,000 dogs and cats a year, roughly three in four healthy and adoptable (ASPCA estimate)	ASPCA 2017 ¹³
National cost barrier	52 percent of pet owners skipped or declined care; 71 percent cite cost	PetSmart Charities 2025 ⁵³
Shortage	243 federal shortage areas across 46 states; about 37,000 veterinarians short in 2026, rising to 83,000 by 2031	AVMA News; NAVEC Report No. 1 ^{54,55}

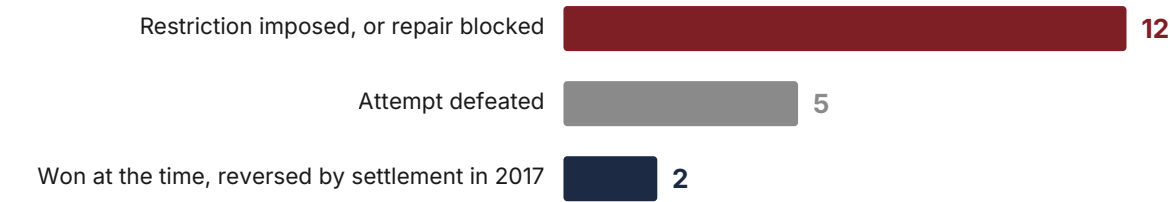
Two public-health facts belong here. A rabies vaccine protects people, not only pets. The animals most likely to be unvaccinated are the ones that arrive at charity clinics.²³ Rules that push those animals away from the one clinic they will ever see are rules against public health. And the veterinary shortage NAVEC has documented in Reports No. 1 through No. 6 means there is no private capacity waiting to absorb these families. The club's restrictions do not redirect care. They end it.

PART XI

The scoreboard: what succeeded and what failed

This report includes the club's defeats as well as its wins, because the defeats show something important: when the public gets a say, the club loses. It wins in committee baskets, in filibuster threats, on the eve of adjournment, and in its own hearing rooms.

19 documented moves by state veterinary associations or their member-run boards, 2011 to 2023



Source: episode register in Appendix B. Each move is cited to its primary record in the case files.

Figure 10. Nineteen documented moves against charity care, 2011 to 2023. Twelve succeeded, five were defeated, and the two Alabama convictions were reversed by settlement in 2017. Full register with sources in Appendix B.

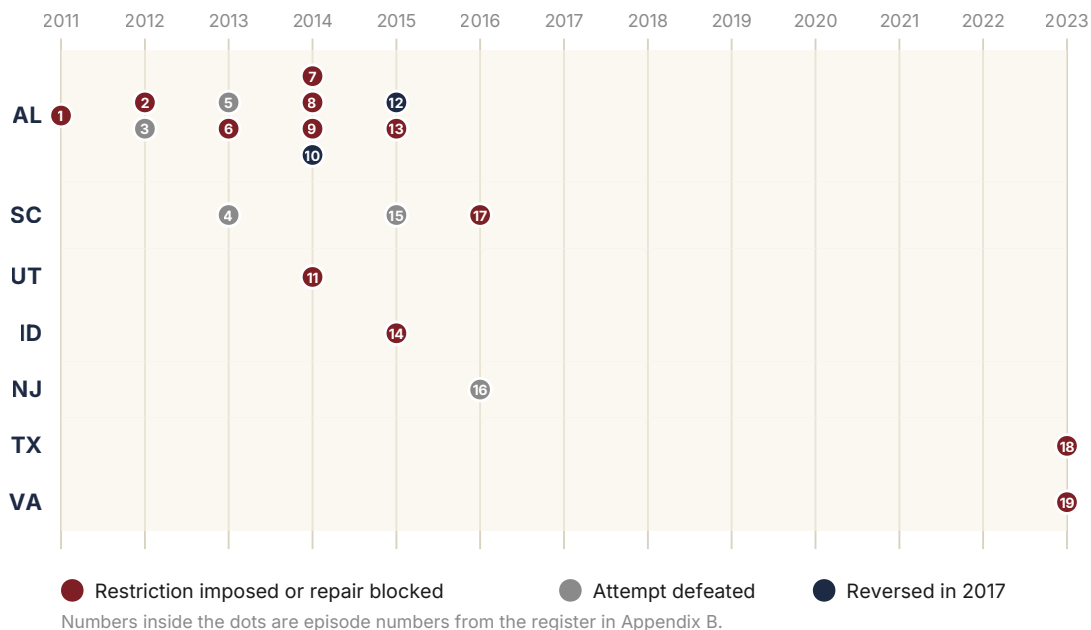


Figure 11. Where and when. Alabama carried the heaviest load from 2011 to 2015. South Carolina's rider landed in 2016. Texas and Virginia show the 2023 pattern of killing repairs quietly. Register numbers refer to Appendix B.

Where the club lost

- Alabama, October 2012: eighteen speakers, all for the clinics, and the board's own lawyer sank the equipment rule.³²
- Alabama, 2013: the board's SB 25 failed.¹⁰
- South Carolina, 2013 and 2015: the direct bills failed under "incredibly vocal and strong opposition."^{2,19}
- New Jersey, 2016: the public-assistance-only bill was withdrawn.¹⁹
- Alabama, 2017: the prosecutions collapsed when a lawsuit was ready.¹³

Where the club won

- Every legislative repair in Alabama from 2012 to 2015, by basket, filibuster, or postponement.^{30, 36,42}
- The South Carolina rider, by substitute and override.^{8,7}
- The Idaho and Utah income limits, by private agreement.^{19,2}
- The Texas repairs of 2023 and 2025, by Senate committee and denial of a hearing.^{17,18}
- The Virginia rabies price cap, by opposition and sine die.²¹

The pattern is the proof. A cause that wins in daylight does not need the eve of adjournment. The club's wins came where the public could not watch, and its losses came everywhere it could.

The verdict, and what to do about it

The verdict NAVEC asks the reader to reach

The American Veterinary Medical Association and its state chapters ran a coordinated campaign across many states. Its aim was to limit charity veterinary care for the poorest families in America. The national association wrote the policy that endorses income tests. It hosted the session where the chapters traded methods. It ran the alert system that tracked the repair bills. The chapters wrote the bills and the riders. They testified against the repairs. They nominated the board members. In Alabama they used a public board to prosecute charity surgeons. The stated reasons failed every independent test. The federal competition agency, an administrative law judge, a governor, and a national study all found against them. The harm fell on families who skip care because of cost, and on animals that will never see another clinic.

This conduct is morally indefensible. Not because veterinarians should work for free. Not because private clinics are the villains. They are not. It is indefensible because a members' club used the power of the state to decide which poor families may be helped, and where, and by whom. Its stated purpose was to protect its members' income. Nothing in the Veterinarian's Oath licenses that. And a club that will do this to poor families' pets is the last organization a state should trust to run the gates of the profession.

What legislators can do

1. **Repeal the two statutes.** Texas Health and Safety Code § 828.012(b) and South Carolina Code § 40-69-295(B) should be struck. A charity's clinic should be able to help any family that walks in, anywhere.
2. **No means test without evidence.** Any bill or rule that limits charity care by income must carry a published finding, from a public health authority and not a trade association, that the limit protects an animal. None has ever been produced.
3. **Sunlight for amendments.** Any amendment that touches veterinary practice, licensing, or charity care should require 72 hours' public notice before a floor vote. South Carolina's rider would not have survived three days in the open.
4. **The referee cannot come from the club's bench.** No state board member should be appointed from a list supplied by the state association. No board should sit in judgment of a charity clinic without at least one public member and one shelter or charity veterinarian at the table. In 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court decided *North Carolina State Board of Dental Examiners v. Federal Trade Commission*. It held that a board controlled by active market participants is not immune from antitrust law unless the state actively supervises it. States should take that warning seriously.

5. **Independent judges, always.** No licensing board should run its own disciplinary hearings. A board should not be able to overrule an administrative law judge's findings of fact without a written explanation that a court can review.
6. **Ask the second question.** Every legislator who hears from a state veterinary association on a charity-care bill should ask: who else did you hear from? If the answer is no one, the bill is not ready.

What the public can do

- Pet owners can tell their own veterinarian that they know association dues fund this lobbying, and ask whether the veterinarian agrees with it. Most working veterinarians never voted on any of it.
- Shelters and charities can register every association position on every bill, in public, and NAVEC will maintain that register.
- Independent clinic owners can say what the record shows: the charity down the street was never their competitor, and the club that claims to speak for them never asked them.

What NAVEC will do

NAVEC will send this report to the Texas and South Carolina legislatures with a request to repeal the two statutes. It will send it to the Federal Trade Commission with a request to revisit the questions its staff raised in 2012. It will send it to the AVMA with an invitation to publish the symposium record and the alert history. NAVEC will publish any response in full.

THE BACK OF THE REPORT

Scarcity normally produces substitutes. When the substitute is a charity, and the charity is made illegal, the scarcity becomes policy. Ending that policy is the campaign. The first step is to say, with the documents in hand, exactly who wrote it.

METHOD

How this report was built, and how to correct it

NAVEC built this report from primary records first. These include bill texts and histories, legislative journals, a governor's veto message, state code, a Federal Trade Commission staff comment, board disciplinary outcomes as reported, and the AVMA's and the state associations' own policies, plans, and news reporting. Trade and local press are cited for facts they reported directly and for quotes they attributed to named people. These include dvm360, VIN News, the Cullman Times, the Dothan Eagle, Alabama Public Radio, Animals 24-7, HumanePro, Nonprofit Quarterly, and KXAN. Advocacy sources are cited for documents they reproduced and for outcomes they were party to. These include the ASPCA, Alley Cat Allies, and Human Animal Support Services. They are identified as advocacy sources where they appear.

Descriptions of disciplinary and court proceedings are attributed to the parties who made them. NAVEC does not claim to know anyone's motive. Where this report draws a conclusion, the sentence says so.

Three claims that circulate in this debate were checked and are not relied on. First, no Alabama statute ever legalized nonprofit spay-neuter clinics. Every bill from 2012 to 2015 died, and the campaign ended by settlement in 2017. Second, the Huntsville clinic's 8,882 surgeries were performed over 28 months, not one year. Third, the Texas owned-animal ban dates from 1991, not 2005. The 2005 bill left it untouched. NAVEC's own earlier materials are being conformed to these findings.

NAVEC welcomes fact-checking. Send any correction with a source to info@navec.org. Corrections are published with the date and the change.

APPENDIX A

Names, short forms, and what they mean

ALVMA

Alabama Veterinary Medical Association. The Alabama state chapter.

ALVPOA

Alabama Veterinary Practice Owners Association. A group of practice owners formed in 2012 to fight the first legalizing bill.

AMI (area median income)

The middle household income for a local area. "80 percent of AMI" is the common federal line for a low-income household.

ASBVME

Alabama State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners. The government licensing board.

ASPCA

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A national animal-welfare charity.

AVMA

American Veterinary Medical Association. The national trade association for veterinarians.

FTC

Federal Trade Commission. The federal agency that protects competition and consumers.

HASS

Human Animal Support Services. A shelter-reform project that reproduced the TVMA alert.

HQHVS

High-quality, high-volume spay-neuter. Clinics that sterilize many animals a day at low cost.

House of Delegates

The AVMA's policy-making body, seated by the state associations.

JAVMA

Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. The AVMA's scientific journal; "JAVMA News" is its news section.

Means testing

Requiring a family to prove it is poor before it may be helped.

MVPA

Model Veterinary Practice Act. The AVMA's template for state licensing law.

NJVMA

New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association.

PAC

Political action committee. A group that collects money and gives it to candidates.

Releasing agency

In Texas law, a shelter, humane society, or similar organization that adopts out animals.

SCAV

South Carolina Association of Veterinarians. The South Carolina state chapter.

State VMA

A state veterinary medical association. This report calls them chapters.

TBVME

Texas Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners. The Texas licensing board.

TVMA

Texas Veterinary Medical Association. The Texas state chapter.

VVMA

Virginia Veterinary Medical Association.

501(c)(3)

The section of the federal tax code that defines a public charity. A 501(c)(3) has no owners and pays no income tax.

APPENDIX B

Episode register and chart data

The scoreboard and timeline in Part XI are built from this table. The outcome column uses three codes: **Succeeded** means a restriction was imposed or a repair was blocked; **Defeated** means the club's attempt failed; **Reversed** means the club won at the time and the result was undone by the 2017 Alabama settlement. Episodes with no documented association or board role (Texas HB 3806 in 2019 and HB 1614 in 2025) are described in the text but not counted.

Table 10. Episode register, 2011 to 2023 (19 episodes: 12 succeeded, 5 defeated, 2 reversed)

No.	Year	State	Move	Outcome
1	2011	AL	Board denies the Huntsville clinic a permit during an ownership change; clinic shut for ten months	Succeeded
2	2012	AL	Legalizing bill HB 156 passes both chambers, then dies in conference	Succeeded
3	2012	AL	Board rule to bar non-veterinarians from owning veterinary equipment	Defeated
4	2013	SC	SCAV drafts a bill to limit nonprofit services; shelved under public opposition	Defeated
5	2013	AL	Board-backed SB 25 to strip clinics of vaccines and parasite care	Defeated
6	2013	AL	Legalizing bill HB 188 passes House 79-14, dies in the Senate	Succeeded
7	2014	AL	Legalizing bill HB 141 passes House 58-37, pulled under a filibuster threat	Succeeded
8	2014	AL	Board orders the Shelby Humane Society clinic to give rabies shots only	Succeeded
9	2014	AL	Huntsville clinic closes under the threat of prosecution	Succeeded
10	2014	AL	Board convicts Dr. William Weber; license revoked one year	Reversed
11	2014	UT	Utah VMA pressure; county shelter scales back public services	Succeeded
12	2015	AL	Board convicts Dr. Margaret Ferrell on 3 of 29 charges a judge had rejected	Reversed
13	2015	AL	Compromise bill HB 563 indefinitely postponed	Succeeded
14	2015	ID	Idaho VMA income-cap agreement: 80% of county median income	Succeeded
15	2015	SC	S 687: two-mile and one-mile bans plus proof of need	Defeated
16	2016	NJ	NJVMA-backed bill limiting nonprofits to public-assistance clients; withdrawn	Defeated
17	2016	SC	Act 274: 'within eyesight' ban enacted over the governor's veto	Succeeded
18	2023	TX	HB 3439 repair passes House 108-33, dies in Senate committee; TVMA opposed	Succeeded

No.	Year	State	Move	Outcome
19	2023	VA	HB 1468 \$20 rabies-shot cap; VVMA opposed; failed	Succeeded

Sources for each episode are given in the state ledgers (Tables 2 to 4) and the text of Parts IV to VII.

Chart data

Table 11. Figures used in the charts

Figure	Values	Source
South Carolina votes	Senate 40-0; House 105-8; Senate concurrence 38-4; overrides 37-4 and 92-3	Vote history ⁷
Huntsville live-release rate	34 percent before, 73 percent with the clinic open	HumanePro ³⁹
Huntsville surgeries	8,882 in 28 months (NAVEC: $8,882 \div 28 \times 12 \approx 3,806$ a year); about 2,000 a year after closure	HumanePro ³⁹
Prices	Private "\$300 or more"; nonprofit "\$45 to \$80"; Alabama Spay/Neuter Clinic \$50 to \$95; Wiregrass \$40 to \$70	dvm360; Cullman Times; Dothan Eagle ^{31,36,38}
JAVMA 2018	1,144 of 1,416 cats (81%) and 572 of 1,794 dogs (32%) unvaccinated; 3,768 owners, 22 clinics	JAVMA ²³
Money	\$10,000 PAC contribution, Sept. 26, 2013; more than \$14,000 total	Cullman Times ³⁶
Priced-out public	52 percent skipped care; 71 percent cite cost; 243 shortage areas; 37,000 to 83,000 shortage	PetSmart Charities; AVMA News; NAVEC ^{53,54,55}
Alerts	"Over 800" alerts in 2023	AVMA 2023 report ²¹

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ABOUT

NAVEC

The North American Veterinary Ethics Council (NAVEC) is a 501(c)(3) public charity that advocates for fairness, transparency, ethics, and merit in veterinary medicine. It publishes the Workforce and Access Research Series, documents the structures that limit the supply of veterinary care in the United States, and works with shelters, charities, independent clinics, and pet owners to change them.

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