VIEWPOINT

"Congress shall make no law. . .
abridging the freedom of speech or of the press"

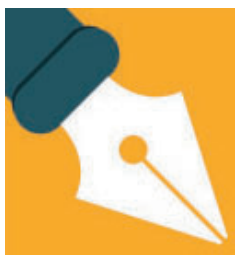
Published every Monday
Mike Feltes, General Manager
Jeff Helfrich, Managing Editor

The Ogle County Life is a division of
News Media Corporation.

Response to cat declawing column

Scott Reeder,

Your statement, "…the best intended legislation can have disappointing consequences." Disappointing, indeed. That can be applied almost infinitely.



Animal rights activists are not pitted against veterinarians. Quite the contrary, for what reason do people become vets if not to preserve the lives of animals? They are often anything but pragmatists. They are healers, first and foremost. Vets are also not limited to "four-legged critters".

The son and husband of a vet would know this. I have rescued more than 600 animals and I encounter situations and behaviors far beyond your ken.

Declawing cats is unnecessary and inherently cruel. It's something humans do mostly out of convenience. Typically, because they refuse to train their pets.

Yes, cats can be trained!

"Shelters are often overwhelmed." Is an understatement to the nth degree. We are literally buried in animals that were 100 percent failed by humans.

Declawing is not an alternative to being able to keep a cat. It is not the "state of the world we live in."

The long-term consequences of declawing are numerous enough to legislate for the halt of the practice. "Done safely" is great. Sadly, that is not often the case, and the cats pay the price for the rest of their lives. Paw pain, back pain, infection, tissue necrosis (resulting in additional surgery) as well as altering their mobility because of the way their paws meet the ground are just some of the obvious detriments to the maiming you condone.

Remove the ends of your toes! Claws can also grow back causing nerve damage and bone spurs. Declawing can also cause impairment of normal cat behavior. Cats by nature are climbers. Removing their claws robs them of that natural ability as well as stripping them of their first defense. Cats groom themselves, using their claws.

"Tomcats who would just as soon not have one particular appendage removed." Testicles as well as ovaries are reproductive organs, not appendages. Spay/neuter practices prevent unwanted litters. Remember? Shelters are "overwhelmed"? We are buried in irresponsible owner mistakes and the greed of breeders.

If a person is immune compromised, has a blood disorder, or dementia they are typically not well-suited for the responsibility of a cat. Cats hunt. Indoors or outdoors. Cats carry toxoplasmosis. Any individual prone to infection should never be near a litterbox nor a cat that's been pawing in one.

Regarding folks with dementia; if they cannot care for themselves safely and consistently, how can they possibly be entrusted with the care of another creature who depends on them implicitly?

"Trying to legislate medical procedures by legislative fiat doesn't make sense." Exactly my opinion regarding my uterus.

Melodee Hoffman
Mt. Morris

LIFE letters' policy

Concise letters are most likely to be chosen for publication, but the use of any material is at the discretion of management. All letters must be signed or they will not be considered for publication.

During election times, no letters written by the candidates endorsing themselves will be considered for publication.

Editing may be necessary for space, clarity or to avoid obscenity or libel, but ideas will not be altered. Writers are urged to use discretion and refrain from sarcasm or personal attacks.

Criticism of individuals or organizations that is not broached tactfully will jeopardize the publication of a letter. Letters will be published in the order that they are received, unless there is a time factor involved, space permitting.

Pomp and Circumstance

POMP and Circumstance playing in the background as graduates will be marching down the aisle to accept their diplomas. Proud parents, family and friends crowding gymnasium bleachers or folding chairs to cheer on their loved one.

Yep, graduation is here. On to college or on to the work force; decisions must be made. It's off into the "real" world, except I'm no longer sure what is real and what is fiction these days. I guess these young people will define that in the coming years.

Congratulations!

Scholarships

Megan Hagemann, Jack Richolson, Lauren Carlson, Alexandria Cassens, Morgan Schabacker, Kennedy Strohecker, Breanna Cisketti and Grace Prose were all recently named as recipients of scholarships awarded by the Ogle County Farm Bureau in 2023.

Cisketti was awarded the Del Flessner Memorial Scholarship in the amount of $1,500. This scholarship was created to honor the legacy of long-time Ogle County Farm Bureau Manager Del Flessner. She is the daughter of Brian and Brandi Cisketti. Breanna is a 2022 graduate of Polo High School and is currently majoring in agribusiness at Sauk Valley Community College with plans to attend UW-Platteville next fall.

Cassens and Hagemann were named winners of the $1,000 General Farm Bureau Scholarship.

Cassens is the daughter of John and Diane Cassens, Byron. She is a 2022 graduate of Byron High School and currently attends Luther College majoring in nursing.

Hagemann is the daughter of Brad and Jean Hagemann, Mt. Morris. She is a 2020 graduate of Forreston High School and attends UW-Platteville majoring in animal science.

Ron Kern

Richolson was named the recipient of the $1,000 Don Bybee Memorial Scholarship, sponsored through the generosity of the Bybee Family to honor Mr. Bybee for his many years of service to agriculture in Ogle County. Jack is the son of Brad and Julie Richolson, Lindenwood. Jack is a 2022 graduate from Rochelle Township High School and currently attends Iowa State University majoring in agricultural studies.

Schabacker is the recipient of the Mark Detig Memorial Scholarship awarded in the amount of $1,000. This scholarship honors the late Mark Detig for his service to the Ogle County Pork Producers Association and Ogle County agriculture. Morgan is the daughter of Todd Schabacker and Anita and Mike Friedlund, Rochelle. Morgan is a 2020 graduate from Rochelle Township High School is currently attending Iowa State University majoring in agricultural business.

Carlson is the Ag Technology Scholarship winner. Lauren is the daughter of Jason and Julie Carlson, Byron. She will graduate Byron High School this year and will continue her studies at either UW-Platteville or Southeast Missouri State majoring in environmental horticulture. The scholarship is awarded in the amount of $1,000.

Strohecker is the recipient of the Mary LeFevre Memorial Scholarship, sponsored in cooperation between the farm bureau and the Jeff and Joyce Tremble Family. The scholarship focuses on students pursuing careers in healthcare. Kennedy is the daughter of Ron and Tasha Sims, Byron. She will graduate Byron High School this spring and attend the Viterbo University majoring in nursing. The scholarship is awarded at $1,000.

Prose was awarded the George LeFevre Memorial Scholarship in the amount of $1,000. It also is funded with the cooperation of the Jeff and Joyce Tremble Family, recognizing Mr. LeFevre for his lifelong service to Ogle County agriculture. Gracie is the daughter of Nick and Charity Prose, Oregon. Gracie will graduate Oregon High School this spring and go onto study ag communications at either Highland Community College or Iowa State University.

This marks the 25th year that the Ogle County Farm Bureau has awarded scholarships to member dependents who seek to pursue course studies in agriculture at an accredited institution of higher education.

Scholarships will again be awarded in 2024 and applications will be available in January. For information on the Ogle County Farm Bureau Scholarship Program contact me at 815-732-2231.

"A graduation ceremony is an event where the commencement speaker tells thousands of students dressed in identical caps and gowns that 'individuality' is the key to success." -Robert Orben

Ron Kern is the manager of the Ogle County Farm Bureau.

The worst kind of graft is perfectly legal

THE worst kind of graft is perfectly legal.

That's a lesson I've observed in my 35 years as a journalist.

I've been thinking about that lesson these past few weeks as revelations are brought forth about gifts U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas received from a rich buddy.

Let me preface my criticisms of the jurist by saying I often agree with his decisions. But that doesn't absolve him from the shady things he has done.

Scott Reeder

Thomas and his wife Ginni, received luxury vacations and private jet travel from Texas real estate magnate Harlan Crow. The justice contends he did nothing wrong and that these were just gifts from a friend.

I don't doubt that Thomas and his wife consider Crow to be a "dear friend." But a more appropriate question might be whether the billionaire would be chumming around with Thomas if he didn't happen to be a Supreme Court justice.

Democrats in Congress are squawking about how wrong this relationship is. What is happening here is wrong – but probably not illegal.

When I was a young reporter in Galveston, Texas, the managing editor had a "Wheels" column in which he wrote a weekly love note to the auto industry.

The price of this journalistic prostitution? Every week, a car company would send him a new vehicle to "test drive" along with a press release espousing the model's virtues.

His teenagers drove them to school. And even when they sent him a real dog with major mechanical issues, he wrote about how swell it was.

"There is no such thing as a bad car," he told a group of young reporters who asked about the practice. We rolled our eyes.

Most journalists would say what he was doing wasn't ethical. The readers were never informed of this cozy relationship. But it's also the kind of graft that is legal.

If pressed as to why he did it, I suspect he would have justified his actions by pointing to his salary and saying he deserved some sort of perk.

Thomas, who earns $184,000 a year as a Supreme Court justice, could make a similar claim, noting that he would make many times that in private practice.

That justification reminds me a bit of one given by another supreme court justice, Ray I. Klingbiel, who served on Illinois' highest court in the 1960s. Before that he was East Moline mayor.

Sometime in 1966 Ted Isaacs, a member of then-Gov. Otto Kerner's cabinet and a wheeler-dealer, managed to put himself in a position to allocate stock in the politically connected Civic Center Bank in Chicago.

At the time, the state high court was considering the dismissal of a 35-count felony indictment accusing Isaacs of bilking the Illinois Treasury. Shortly thereafter, the court unanimously affirmed the dismissal of Isaacs' felony indictments in an opinion written by Klingbiel.

According to the book "Illinois Justice" by Kenneth Manaster, Klingbiel kept his 100 shares in a dresser drawer. Klingbiel insisted that the stock was merely a campaign contribution. But it was given after he had been elected and in the form of a stock certificate and it had been given to him by an associate of Isaacs, who had a case before the court.

"There is no doubt in my mind Isaacs was trying to influence the court with his actions," Manaster told me.

So why do educated people like Thomas and Klingbiel do stupid things like this?

Manaster attributes Klingbiel's transgressions to the Illinois political culture that he had been reared in. Klingbiel served as the Republican mayor of East Moline for six years and before that worked as the city attorney. There were few regulations on campaign contributions in those days.

But that strikes me as a child's excuse: "Everybody's doing it." Someone with a better moral compass would have known better.

Future U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens was appointed chief counsel to the five-member commission that investigated the allegations of wrongdoing.

Stevens was quoted in a 1969 Associated Press article saying, " Chief Justice Roy J. Solfisburg, Justice Ray I. Klingbiel and Theodore J. Isaacs are guilty of gross impropriety. "

But neither Chief Justice Roy Solisburg nor Klingbiel was ever criminally charged. "The short answer is they never could prove they took a bribe to the degree necessary needed in court," Manaster said.

The worst kinds of graft are often legal.

Stevens insisted during his 1975 confirmation that he never would have been nominated for the supreme court if not for the work he had done investigating Klingbiel and Solfisburg.

One honest man rose as two dishonest ones fell.

The episode ended with Klingbiel retiring and Solfisburg resigning from the state supreme court.

Klingbeil's final days were sad ones, Manaster said. He remained bitter about what he described as a "political push" to get him off the court.

Shaken and sorrowful, Manaster said he told one member of the commission, he knew in his heart he was not a crook, "but I was a damn fool."

Will Justice Thomas have such a revelation? Don't hold your breath.

Scott Reeder, a staff writer for Illinois Times, can be reached at sreeder@illinoistimes.com.