

Editorial

Spay/Neuter Laws Ensure Pets', Society's Safety

We would agree with Henry David Thoreau, who paraphrased a magazine motto to come up with the aphorism, "That government is best which governs least." Our republic was founded on the idea that free people are capable of governing themselves. We regard a government that over-sees every aspect of daily life as tyranny.

That said, we would also agree that nevertheless, some elements of social interaction in life in these United States in the 21st century require some form of regulation. "Walk/Don't Walk" signals, for example, impose seemingly arbitrary constraints on law-abiding citizens. Without them, however, we would endanger our lives every time we attempted to cross a street. Some rules (also known as laws, which carry a penalty for disobedience) are necessary for civilization to function.

The city of Los Angeles, California has found it necessary to impose a law on its citizenry that at first glance seems arbitrary and unnecessary. Last Tuesday, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa signed a law requiring most dogs and cats in the city to be spayed or neutered by the time they are four months old. While at first glance the new law may seem an unwarranted intrusion into the lives and conduct of Los Angeles pet owners, the ordinance is, in fact, humane and compassionate, aimed as it is at reducing and eventually eliminating the thousands of euthanizations conducted in Los Angeles' animal shelters every year. Los Angeles animal shelters took in 50,000 cats and dogs last year and euthanized

about 15,000 at a cost of \$2 million, city officials said.

Los Angeles City Councilmember Richard Alarcon, who proposed the pet sterilization law, pointed out that the measure benefits owners and ordinary citizens as well as animals. "Far too many backdoor breeders are treating animals in an inhumane way and disrupting communities. Far too many kids fear walking to school. Far too many people have been maimed by animals roaming the streets," he declared.

While incidents involving feral cats and dogs have not of late made headlines in New York City, the problem besets this municipality as well. At a large advertising facility in Queens, for example, so many feral cats beg for food—and breed—that employees have several times had to find homes for kittens and dispose of those that are ultimately unwanted. Managers have had to put themselves in the unpopular position of forbidding employees to feed the animals in hopes that the felines will seek easier food sources and more comfortable breeding sites elsewhere. The cats give every indication of having once been domesticated or of being only a generation or two removed from having once been someone's pet. Had these animals or their parents been spayed or neutered, the problem of an unloved, unwanted and starving feral feline population in Queens—indeed, in every borough in this city—would exist on a far smaller scale.

The same holds true for dogs. Several

years ago a growing feral canine population in some neighborhoods posed a threat to children walking to school and to pet dogs being walked by their owners. While no new incidents have come to our attention lately, we do not think we err in stating that the problem still exists. Spaying and neutering dogs so that they do not produce litters of unwanted puppies that are abandoned to pose a threat to the health and well being of human and animal residents of New York City should be a part of the thinking of every conscientious pet owner. Unfortunately, this seems far from being the case.

As we said at the beginning of this editorial, we observe that a society functions best with as few laws as possible. However, on occasion laws must be enacted for the greatest good of the greatest number. "If you respect the nature of animals and you respect your role as the person in charge of your animal, you're going to be responsible for that process," Los Angeles City Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, the only councilmember to oppose the spay-and-neuter-at-four-months law, argued. The key word is responsible. The growing population of feral cats and dogs in New York City indicates that some pet owners, for whatever reason, do not assume responsibility for their animals' reproductive well being. In such cases, laws must be put in place that help to improve the quality of life for all denizens of this metropolis, human and animal alike.

the feasibility of relocating a significant number of prisoners from Riker's Island to satellite prisons located in Brooklyn and The Bronx. Since this initiative, if enacted, would provide a significant improvement to the quality of life in Western Queens, I would gladly welcome its enactment.

As you know, the Riker's Island Bridge is the access road to the prison and can only be accessed by driving through the quiet residential neighborhood of Upper Ditmars in Astoria.

Every year, thousands upon thousands of vehicles drive through this neighborhood on their way to Riker's Island, further burdening local residents who already deal with nearby power plants, LaGuardia Airport, and an adjacent Industrial Zone with even more traffic, noise, and pollution.

By reducing the overall prison population, the number of visitors that access Riker's Island will be significantly reduced, thereby significantly reducing traffic congestion and air pollution in the area.

The benefits to the Western Queens community, combined with the benefits to the families of the detainees, who would enjoy easier access to their loved ones, especially in areas that are more accessible by mass transit, make this initiative one

that I am proud to support.

I look forward to continuing our work together to make all of New York City a better place to live and work.

Sincerely yours,
Michael N. Gianaris
Member of Assembly, 36th District

Stabilize House Values

To The Editor:

To most Americans, recession is a personal threat. The constant drumbeat of fear of losing one's employment or home is what people hear. The possibility of not being able to pay the mortgage is as personal as it gets.

Terms including stagnation, consumer price index, cost of living index, GDP and others are foreign and indiscernible and meaningless to many. The pundits' bandwagon of doom increases the impression of a falling sky, particularly when no one is offering a lifejacket. Absent is a plan that addresses the problems that created the risks.

The Federal Reserve continues to cut short-term interest rates, which have not impacted long-term rates that define mortgages. As a result, those facing increasing interest rates are unable to refinance their homes. The action by the Fed serves the interests of the business community, who



Wants New Jails

A copy of the following letter was received by the Gazette.

Hon. Michael Bloomberg
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg,

I write regarding a serious situation affecting the quality of life in Western Queens.

Recently, your administration studied

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