

Op-Ed

Submitted by the
Libertarian Party

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DON'T GIVE THAT DOG A CIGAR!

WHAT WERE POLITICIANS THINKING WHEN THEY PASSED THESE SILLY LAWS?

BY BILL WINTER (782 WORDS)

The five most dangerous words in the English language are, or so it's been said, "There oughta be a law."

That's incorrect. They're the five *funniest* words. Check out the dizzying array of laughable laws (most still on the books) around the USA, and you realize that nothing — repeat, *nothing* — escapes a lawmaker's lust to legislate.

In San Francisco, for example, it's illegal to clean your car with used underwear. In Washington state, it's a crime to pretend your parents are rich. And in Bexley, Ohio, it's against the law to install slot machines in an outhouse. (No word on whether they also banned craps.)

Other laws seem designed to deal with absurdly *trivial* behavior.

In Salt Lake County, Utah, it's illegal to walk around carrying a violin in a paper bag. (Solving half the problem of too much sex and violins in society.)

In New York, it's illegal to knit while on jury duty. (If you knit, you must quit.)

And in Everett, Washington, it's illegal to display a hypnotized person in a store window. (Legal defense: "Officer, I haven't broken the law. That's Al Gore.")

Some laws prohibit activities that, frankly, wouldn't happen anyway.

In Hawaii, for example, it's illegal to insert pennies into your ears. (Handy when cracking down on criminals who confuse their heads with gumball machines.)

In Trout Creek, Utah, it's against the law for a pharmacist to sell gunpowder to cure headaches. (No word on whether it's a crime to sell aspirin to fire a gun.)

And in Florida, it's a crime to have sexual relations with a porcupine. (We see the point.)

Speaking of illegal lust, in Willodale, Oregon, it's a crime for a husband to talk dirty during sex. In Newcastle, Wyoming, it's illegal to have sex in a store's walk-in meat freezer. And in Liberty Corner, New Jersey, couples face jail time if they accidentally sound the horn while having sex in a car. (Designed to curb, ahem, excessive horn-iness.)

Cigarette-puffing, booze-swilling animals are another major social problem.

That's why in Meadville, New Jersey, it's illegal to offer cigarettes or whiskey to animals at

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the zoo. In Zion, Illinois, it's a crime to give lighted cigars to a dog, cat, or other domesticated animal. And in Oklahoma, it's illegal to get a fish drunk. (They prefer their whiskey with a splash of water, by the way.)

When criminals aren't trying to get Fido to puff Marlboros or guzzle Jack Daniels, they're just, well, *bothering* him. This must stop.

So, in Oklahoma, you can be arrested for making ugly faces at a dog. In Hayden, Arizona, it's a crime to bother bullfrogs. In Galesburg, Illinois, there is a \$1,000 fine for beating rats with a baseball bat. Frankly, it's cheaper to molest butterflies in Pacific Grove, California — for that crime, you face only a \$500 fine.

Then there's food felonies. In Memphis, Tennessee, it's illegal to take an unfinished slice of pie home from a diner. In Oklahoma, it's a crime to take a bite of someone else's hamburger. (The "Hamburgler Law.") And in Ocean City, New Jersey, it's against the law to slurp your soup in a restaurant.

There must be *something* politicians don't regulate. How about . . . bathtubs?

Try again. Bathtubs can be used illegally as a sleeping place for donkeys (a crime in Arizona); as a location for singing (good acoustics, but a crime in Pennsylvania), or as a storage place for alligators (a crime in Arkansas).

After bathtubs, serious criminals graduate to swimming pools, which is why politicians in Baldwin Park, California made it against the law to ride a bicycle in one.

When it comes to music, the statutory song remains the same. In Santa Monica, California, it's illegal to play percussion instruments on the beach. In Oneida, Illinois, it's illegal to sing the song, "It Ain't Goin' to Rain No Mo'." And in Cicero, Illinois, it's even against the law to hum — but only on Sundays.

Sometimes, politicians simply get the urge to *ban* something. In Sidney, Illinois, they banned kite flying. In Purdy, Missouri they banned dancing. (Calling Kevin Bacon!) In Washington state, they banned lollipops. (Alas, the Lollipop Guild is a lilliputian lobbying force.) In Evanston, Illinois, they banned bowling. (Giving new meaning to a "Three Strikes" law.)

Then there are politicians who get angry at misdemeanor mispronunciations. In Arkansas, it's a crime not to pronounce it "Arkan-SAW." And in Joliet, Illinois, you face a \$5 fine if you pronounce it "Jolly-ETTE," instead of "Joe-lee-ETTE."

Looking over the list of senseless statutes and outrageous ordinances, you might be tempted to say: "There oughta be a law . . . against ludicrous laws."

But don't go there. It only encourages them.

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NOTE: A photo of Mr. Winter and an electronic version of this essay are available.
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