

Legal Smorgasbord

By Reg P. Wydeven
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One of the most challenging aspects of being a lawyer is keeping track of all the new laws that are created either by congress or by the courts. While this certainly keeps us on our toes, every once in a while a statute or case comes along that's a little out of the ordinary. Here are a few examples:

- In Detroit, a jury awarded \$10.6 million to dejay Erin Weber who was fired by WYCD-FM after she complained that she was allergic to a co-worker's perfume and it made her sick. Station owner, Infinity Broadcasting Inc., asked the other woman to stop wearing the perfume and modified Weber's schedule so she wouldn't come into contact with her. Infinity alleged Weber was fired for failing to come to work, however, Weber claims she was discriminated against her for her disability of allergies and Infinity retaliated after she filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. A federal jury awarded Weber \$7 million in punitive damages, \$2 million for mental anguish and emotional distress and \$1.6 million for past and future compensation. Obviously, Infinity plans to appeal.
- The New York City Council passed legislation requiring many new and renovated buildings in the city to have twice as many restrooms for women as men. The Women's Restroom Equity Bill, nicknamed the 'potty parity bill', unanimously passed to revise a 1984 law requiring just one women's bathroom for every men's restroom. It is meant to ease women's notoriously long waits for public restrooms.
- Hawaii's Governor Linda Lingle recently signed a law allowing residents to leave a trust for the care of their dog, cat, or other domestic animal. Currently 20 other states have legally enforceable trust laws for pets. However, a court can reduce the amount transferred to a trust "if it determines that the amount substantially exceeds the amount required for the intended use and the court finds that there will be no substantial adverse impact in the care, maintenance, health, or appearance of the designated domestic or pet animal."
- Apollo astronaut Neil Armstrong is threatening to sue a Marx's Barber Shop in Lebanon, Ohio, after the owner collected Armstrong's hair after a trim and sold it to a collector for \$3,000 without Armstrong's permission.
- A Russian astrologer has sued NASA over its Deep Impact probe that smashed into the comet Tempel 1 to create a cloud of debris that scientists hope to examine to learn how the solar system was formed. Marina Bai claims the experiment "ruins the natural balance of forces in the universe," and she is seeking 8.7 billion rubles (\$300 million) in damages, which is the cost of the mission, for her "moral sufferings," and for "deforming her horoscope."
- Washington Redskins running back Clinton Portis settled a lawsuit against former teammate Ifeanyi Ohalete for \$18,000. Ohalete sued Portis for failing to pay him for allowing Portis to use his uniform number 26. Portis agreed to pay Ohalete \$40,000 for the number – \$20,000 up front, \$10,000 by Week 8 of the NFL season and \$10,000 by Christmas. After Ohalete was cut by the Redskins, Portis apparently felt Ohalete's departure voided the rest of the contract, so he didn't pay the final two installments.

One thing's for sure – being a lawyer is never dull.