



OPINION

Bevin investigation proves governor pardons need limit

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Arkansas needs to limit the governor's power to issue pardons. Without a limit on the number of pardons, this sole authority designated to the governor is too much power. Since the Kentucky gubernatorial election Nov. 5, former Gov. Matt Bevin issued more than 650 pardons, arousing suspicions from the FBI. Bevin's decisions have been publicly denounced by other Kentucky state and federal politicians. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell labeled the pardons as "completely inappropriate." Morgan McGarvey, the Kentucky Senate Minority Leader, and Rep. Chris Harris both applauded Attorney General Daniel Cameron for pursuing a federal investigation. Pardons are a constitutional power assigned to governors, but the public's safety should be the highest concern. Bevin's decision to pardon Patrick Baker and Micah Schoettle illustrate two examples of this error. Though convicted for reckless homicide, Bevin pardoned Baker, whose

family raised \$21,500 and donated \$4,000 for Bevin's failed re-election campaign. Bevin pardoned Schoettle, found guilty of raping a 9-year-old girl, because he declared victims of repeated sexual conduct would have "repercussions of that, physically and medically," and claimed the victim did not. In spite of medical research, which concluded the opposite, Bevin relied only on his personal beliefs of sexual assault. Data from a series of U.S. National Institute of Medicine reports concluded that physical examination is vital when considering sexual assault. The determination of sexual misconduct toward a child is rooted more in the child's testimony. Furthermore, the report concluded that "all physicians should know that the physical findings are normal in more than 90% of cases." Schoettle served only 19 months of his 23-year sentence. Another example is Bryan Bishop, a man found guilty of possessing heroin and meth in March 2019. After he failed to complete his drug rehabilitation program in April 2019, Bishop was sent to finish his 8-year sentence in prison. Despite Bishop writing to



Claire Hutchinson Cartoonist

the judge admitting he needed help, Bevin pardoned his sentence along with 336 other drug offenders. On Dec. 27, Bishop was found dead from an overdose. "We should want there to be integrity in our (justice) system," Bevin said in a December interview on NewsRadio 840 in Kentucky. The irony here stems from Bevin's assumed position as judge and jury, where he unilaterally decided innocence and guilt. Similarly, from 1996-2007, former Gov. Mike Huckabee issued more releases through pardons and commutations than his three predecessors combined. Not only did Huckabee release Wade Stewart, one of 12 convicted murderers pardoned, but he also freed Wayne Dumont, a convicted rapist, who subsequently raped and killed another woman. Judges and juries deal with convictions, not governors. Bevin caused harm to families, prematurely reintroduced offenders to the streets, and ignored the victims of heinous crimes, and for that, there should be consequences.

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Petland sets substantial financial, emotional price on puppy mill dogs

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After investigations proved several Petland stores across the nation were sites of animal neglect

and abuse in recent years, there should not be a new location here in Northwest Arkansas. However, in July 2019, a Petland franchise opened at the Pinnacle Hills Promenade in Rogers, and last month, local residents took to the store to protest.

On Dec. 22, 2019, with animal sales at a high for the holiday season, demonstrations were held outside the Rogers Petland store after allegations that the local Petland was selling sick, unfit puppies. On the surface, Petland is similar to other pet supply chains already in the area. The store sells everything expected from a pet supply chain: kibble, leashes, aquariums and small pets like hamsters and parakeets. But in recent years, Petland stores have received negative attention for keeping and selling sick puppies. After a visitor to the Frisco, Texas, Petland store shared a picture of an underweight boxer puppy on Facebook in 2018, backroom investigations in both 2018 and 2019 uncovered other crimes worse malnourishment. This wasn't Petland's first media controversy, either. The company has consistently made the news since 2009, when multiple investigations by the Humane Society confirmed that the puppies sold in Petland stores were largely sourced from puppy mills. Although puppy mills manage to operate legally in the U.S., most facilities keep dogs in nearly unlivable conditions. Adult dogs are forced to breed



Katherine Holitik Staff Photographer

A franchise of the national pet supply chain Petland, pictured Jan. 20, opened in Rogers this summer. The chain has been the center of much controversy regarding the wellbeing of its animals.

until they die without adequate food, water or even shelter for themselves or their puppies, according to the USDA. Tiffanie's, a Missouri puppy mill and Petland supplier, was responsible for the death of 35 puppies in a six-month span in 2019, according to a citation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 2018, a Petland store in Tyler, Texas, placed a healthy, recently arrived shih tzu in an isolation crate for sick puppies when there was no room left in the store's display kennels. It seems to be common practice for unwell-looking dogs to be placed in areas away from customers' view, injected with saline solution as "hydration" or force-fed drug concoctions as a substitute for veterinary care, according to an ABC report. What sets Petland apart from other local pet supply retailers, like Petsmart or Petco, is the sale of puppies. Held in glass-walled, tank-like enclosures, Petland sells a variety of puppy breeds, from Pomskeys to Basset Hounds. Petland's competitors do not sell puppies. Petco, for example, partners with rescue programs and sees the sale of puppies as unethical, according to their website. After a multi-state outbreak of Campylobacter, a drug-resistant infection linked to contact with pet store puppies, was traced back to Petland in January of last year, it wouldn't be unusual for more of the national chain's dogs than usual to be leaving the store sick, according to the CDC. Petland poses a threat to lives beyond the animals in their stores. When contracted by children or the elderly, Campylobacter can turn deadly. The outbreak was speculated to be a result of the constant presence of feces in the puppies' enclosures at Petland and led to 23 hospitalizations across 17 states. 2018 and 2019 investigations by the USDA revealed that not only does nearly every puppy arriving at Petland from a puppy mill suffer from health issues, the stores consistently refuse veterinary care for their animals until they are on the brink of death. The only reason a Petland puppy sees a vet is to be euthanized, and not every one of their neglected puppies is fortunate enough to go out that way.

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Puppies at Petland sleep Jan. 20.