

County, which shall include but not be limited to licensing of all cats, fixing of license fees, collecting and disposing of unlicensed cats and establishing a pound therefor."

The bill is not specific as to how or why cats should be regulated or controlled, or as to that from which they should be restrained.

This omission of detail would be certain to create a degree of doubt in the minds of the County Commissioners, and considerable concern among owners, friends and fanciers of felinity.

The cat, while long known to us in a state of domesticity, is, in fact, ascended or descended to us from a condition of wild freedom in the forests of Europe, and is related, even though distantly, to the lion, lynx, tiger, leopard, puma and others of the genus *Felis* which still enjoy the largesse of unlimited liberty in their native habitats.

Thus, the cat is, by nature, a roamer and a prowler, and, like his distant cousins prefers the gentle cover of the night, both for reasons of romance and pursuit of prey.

Some would argue, I suppose, that the cat is a menace to bird life. While there is some truth in this, it is even more true that the birds have the gift of flight, and it is rare indeed that the feathered visitors to rural or urban neighborhoods fall prey to the hunting cat. To deal with those cats who revert to a state of wildness and take to the woods in search of nourishment, the responsibility properly rests with our protectors of game.

The good accomplished by the neighborhood or back lawn feline hunter in reducing the numbers of rats, mice and other destructive rodents greatly outweighs any harm that a cat may do to bird life.

Cats are the pets of children, often the comforters of invalids and sometimes the companions of the aged. They are traditional, living fixtures before many a hearth. They are noted for their cleanliness and respected for their capability in caring for themselves.

While the cat lacks the demonstrativeness of the dog, it has its own way of showing affection for those who are kind to it. It has the good sense to resent and resist those who would do it harm.

It is, indeed, this very independence of the cat which endears it to many of our people, even as the eagle, in his boldness and love of liberty, endeared himself to and inspired the pioneers of our western lands.

The tendency to license, to limit, to control, regulate and restrain is too common, and often too easy of accomplishment, in our modern society.

Let us respect, rather than resent, that animal which, though adapted to domesticity, still retains a commendable degree of independence and a lasting love for liberty.

Let us not deprive the cat of freedom to further clutter the statutes of the State and complicate the duties of law enforcement officers.

I do not believe the law proposed in House Bill 716 would have widespread favor among the people of Prince George's County, and I am convinced its enforcement would be very difficult, if not impossible.

For these reasons, I am vetoing House Bill 716 of the 1955 Session of the General Assembly.

Respectfully,

(s) THEODORE R. MCKELDIN,

Governor