

Florida's Strangest Laws

By: Jessica Cohn-Kleinberg

The United States of America has its share of strange laws. But Florida takes the cake. Elephants cannot be tied to telephone poles, ice cream trucks cannot sell their wares in cemeteries, and you cannot, under any circumstances, be caught in downtown Pensacola with less than ten dollars on your person.¹ And you think these laws are weird? Just wait.

Considering selling those annoying mistakes from a drunken night 8 years ago? You know, those screaming, crazy things covered in dirt that beg you for Cocoa puffs and then use them as grenades at the breakfast table: your children.

I know *I* want to sell your children.

And while I believe kidnapping children (even if it's just to give them away again) is very, very illegal, I wasn't sure if there was a law against selling them. Well, there is. Florida Statute § 847.0145 under "Selling or buying of minors" states that this is a felony of the first degree. Yes, this needed to be made into a law because evidently enough Floridians were selling their children. Now this law in itself isn't strange or dumb. It's just the fact that it needed to be explicitly stated that worries me. We Floridians don't seem to like our "young-uns" (not that I can blame you.) But the most worrisome part is the wording of this law. Under every instance where selling your child is illegal, it is for sexual reasons. This begs the question, is it okay to sell your children if it isn't of a sexual nature? I feel like there is an alarming loophole here that allows me to auction off my young if they don't end up as sex slaves. It's nice to know what our fair State chooses to focus on.

On a lighter note, did you know that it's also illegal to sing in a public place while attired in a swimsuit? Yes, you cannot leisurely stroll down the beach in a two piece while belting out "Poker Face." Not unless you want to get tackled by the police. Well you might not get tackled, but you could get cited. Apparently being annoying is illegal. Honestly, this oddly specific law leads me to believe that someone singing in a bathing suit once aggravated a public official. Yes you have the right to free speech, but no one ever said anything about free singing. Ah, the perks of power.

Now let's get to the sex laws. Those are what we really want to talk about. Well, the State is very concerned about what's happening in your bedroom. And although I'm not sure how they would enforce half of these, it doesn't negate the fact they are still illegal. First of all, you cannot, at any time, kiss your wife's breast. I can't even begin to imagine what the rationalization for this was. And if you're thinking, "Oh fine, I can put my mouth to better use," well think again; oral sex is also illegal. In fact, any position other than missionary? Illegal. So if

¹ <http://www.dumblaws.com/laws/united-states/florida>.

you're, bored with the same standard position... there really isn't much you can do. Actually, you can do anything you want, because as far as I know, the State still can't place cameras in your bedroom like *1984*; I hope.

And if you were thinking of moving in with your honey, you'll have to marry them first. Those religious folk were right; you *are* living in sin, in the eyes of God and the law. It seems living with someone you're not married to, and performing "lewd acts" with them makes you "guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in Florida Statutes § 775.082 or § 775.083."

Those are just the general State laws. The city and county ordinances get even more specific. For example, if you find yourself in Big Pine Key and you are thinking of molesting a Key deer, wait until you are out of the city. Yep it's not only frowned upon, but illegal as well. You'll have to suppress those urges and let them out at another time, perhaps at a neighboring zoo.

In Broward County, all of those Hot Dog vendors crowding the streets are targeted with a specific type of regulation. According to Broward Local Ordinance Chapter 39 under ZONING in ARTICLE VII. COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS §39-300, those people cannot be "inappropriately attired." Evidently they "shall be considered to cause a hazard or impediment to traffic." They specifically delve into what qualifies as inappropriate. I'm going to show you the excerpt because I would like you to know how much thought was put into this:

Inappropriate attire shall include clothing which shows any portion of the anal cleft, cleavage or buttocks of males or females such as G-strings, T-back bathing suits, thong bikinis or any other clothing or covering that does not completely and opaquely cover the anal cleft, cleavage or buttocks of males and females. Inappropriate attire shall also include clothing which shows the portion of the human female breast directly or laterally below a point immediately above the top of the areola with less than a fully opaque covering. This definition shall include the entire lower portion of the human female breast, including the areola and nipple, but shall not include any portion of the cleavage of the human female breast exhibited by a dress, blouse, shirt, leotard, bathing suit or other clothing, provided the areola is not exposed.²

Are you not proud that your tax money is being spent for our officials to delve into the specifics of breast coverage? Don't worry though, this only applies to people selling hot dogs. If you're selling hamburgers, you're in the clear to wear whatever you want. Pre-existing definitions of nudity and obscenity at both the local and federal levels still apply, however. So the redundancy of these specifics with regard to hot dog vendors makes me question if our officials just like to talk about anal clefts.

² <http://www.dumblaws.com/laws/united-states/florida>.

In Daytona Beach, if you started to think that the trash can sitting all seductively in the corner over there is looking good, think again. There is a law explicitly denying you your right to molest that trash can. You're just going to have to live with that heartbreak. It seems there were enough people being tempted by garbage receptacles to require this law. For who will speak for the trash can? Daytona Beach will.

I'm sure that at this point you're shocked and appalled over all of the things you now have to stop doing, but know that you are not alone! In the state of Florida, laws not only regulate humans, but four-legged furry friends also. In the city of Destin for example, a cat that chases a passer-by is considered by the city to be a 'bad cat.' Destin City Ordinance Section 4-8 is devoted to defining "bad dogs" or "bad cats" and "the owner or custodian of such animal shall pay a civil penalty of one hundred dollars (\$100.00)."³

Now this isn't necessarily a strange law. It makes sense that the government would be concerned about vicious animals. But when exactly does a cat chasing a passer-by become vicious? I would understand if it clawed the person, tried to climb them, jumped out of a tree and assaulted them, or pulled a gun on them, isn't chasing/running what animals do for fun? It's one thing to expect rationality out of a human, but it's a mighty strange state where we subject our pets to our standards of behavior.

I can only advise the people of Destin to be aware – it is illegal for your animal to act like an animal.

In some counties, the laws and the wording are just downright contradictory. Take Tampa for instance. For those of you wanting to visit a strip club, be warned §14-96 under "Female nudity for commercial exploitation" states that women may not expose their breasts while performing "topless dancing."⁴ Seriously? How can someone be a topless dancer without showing their... "tops"? Perhaps the topless dancers in Tampa literally remove the top half of their body, still clothed of course, and then proceed to dance. There is no other way that I can explain the wording of this law. But if you're just looking for a lap dance, you should probably look elsewhere. In Tampa, lap dances must be performed at least 6 feet away from the patron. Now this just defeats the purpose of a lap dance. There seems to be some basic misunderstanding of words like "topless" and "laps" in this county. I'm starting to wonder if the people in Tampa speak English.

These aren't even half of the ridiculous laws that you'll find in this state and many others. Who says law is boring? You can find all sorts of interesting considerations pertaining to the likes of pregnant pigs as well as humans by checking out the following website. Maybe you'll find something worth writing your congressperson about.

³ Destin City *Ord.* No. 65.3, § 8, 3-19-90.

⁴ Tampa City Ordinance No. 14-96, Supp. No. 81.

Personally, I'll be protesting by standing on the corner of City Hall, singing in my bathing suit. After all, this is America.