

# Oakland City Attorney's Office

## Legal Briefs Newsletter

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### Dear Alex,

Please check out this month's edition of the Legal Briefs Newsletter, published by the Oakland City Attorney's Office since 2001 with updates on important initiatives, projects and legal developments in our city.

This month: Dealing with dangerous conditions at the former Oak Knoll Naval base; cracking down on a barbaric "sport" in Oakland; sharing an excellent call for civility in government.

## Cleaning Up Oak Knoll

*City brokers deal with Lehman to clear out fire hazards, trash*



The City Attorney's Office recently brokered a deal with Lehman Holdings, LLC to remove a major fire threat and trash dump conditions at the former Oak Knoll Naval base in the East Oakland hills.

More than a year ago, development of the 167-acre property came to a halt when owner SunCal Oak Knoll LLC went into bankruptcy following the collapse of Wall Street giant Lehman Brothers Holdings. The developer's bankruptcy left shells of more than 90 WWII-era buildings, asbestos, debris and other problems. The Oakland fire chief declared the property a major fire hazard in a city that only 18 years ago suffered one of the worst fire disasters in the history of the U.S.

Oak Knoll neighbors deserve much credit for their work to hold the property owner accountable.

[More info](#)

## Cracking Down on a Blood Sport in Oakland

This year the City Attorney's Office charged about 70 people with crimes related to cockfighting, a barbaric "sport" in which hyper-aggressive roosters are placed in a small enclosure to hack each other to death with gaffs - curved, razor-sharp blades attached to the feet of the animals when they fight.



Cockfighting is illegal in every state, but it's a tradition going back centuries both in the U.S. and in other countries, and it is sadly too common today in our city.

We're going after those who profit from and get enjoyment from cockfighting using a new unit of criminal lawyers in the City Attorney's Office called the Special Prosecution Team.

[More Info](#)  
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## "With Malice Toward None"

On Nov. 6, former congressman and National Endowment for the Humanities Chairman Jim Leach gave a great speech about the decline of public discourse in America. Leach's message - that civilization requires civility - is important not just on a national level, but on the level of our

municipal government as well. A link to the full text is below.

**With Malice Toward None  
Speech by NEH Chairman Jim Leach  
To the Convocation of State Humanities Councils  
Omaha, Nebraska**

EXCERPT: In a political system characterized by historic antipathy to extremes, the decibel level of partisan voices is rising. Rancorous, socially divisive ideological assertions are being made with such frequency that few are thinking through the meaning or consequences of the words being used. Public officials are being labeled "fascist" and "communist." One Member of Congress has even suggested that colleagues be investigated for "un-American activities."

We have a unique national culture with a mosaic of subcultures. A critical question is whether we treat our many cultural differences with dignity and respect and as opportunities to grow and learn, or as divisive traumas worthy of warring over.

**For the full text, go to:**

<http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/speeches/11062009.html>

Please don't hesitate to contact us with questions or comments. We look forward to talking with you.

**Sincerely,**

John A. Russo  
Oakland City Attorney

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