

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE TARGETS CAT RESCUER FOR HARASSMENT**

The office of Secretary of State Cathy Cox has ordered local cat rescuer Kathi Mills to appear in her office and answer questions about her Web site, Kitty Village, or face contempt of court charges.

The order comes in response to an anonymous complaint contending Mills violated the Georgia Charitable Solicitations Act by failing to register Kitty Village with the Secretary of State's office.

However, the Act requires only charitable organizations, paid solicitors, and solicitor agents to register, and Kitty Village is none of these, according to Mills.

"A few weeks ago, I received a letter asking me to register Kitty Village with the Secretary of State's office, and I wrote back immediately, explaining that Kitty Village is not a legal entity of any kind, and therefore does not need to be registered," Mills said.

"Kitty Village is the name of my Web site, [www.kittyvillage.com](http://www.kittyvillage.com), which publicizes cats available for adoption in metro Atlanta," Mills said. "That's all it is."

Mills' attorney, Rob Adelson of Begner & Begner P.C., reviewed the Act and confirmed that Kitty Village is exempt from registration.

"The Georgia Charitable Solicitations Act exempts 'Any charitable organization whose total gross revenue has been less than \$25,000.00 for both the immediately preceding and current calendar years' from registration," Adelson said.

Adelson called Robin Golivesky of the Secretary of State's office in hopes of resolving the matter, but Golivesky insisted that Mills appear for questioning anyway.

Mills encourages the public to attend the interrogation at 10:00 AM on Friday, October 18 at 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Suite 802 West Tower in Atlanta.

"Cathy Cox is up for re-election in November, and the voters have a right to see the kind of investigations her office is wasting taxpayer money on," said Mills.

#### **A pattern of harassment**

Last December, the Atlanta Humane Society filed a \$75,000 libel lawsuit against Mills for criticizing the AHS in a private e-mail group after she viewed a scathingly critical exposé on WSB-TV.

First Amendment attorneys across the country who reviewed the case said Mills was completely within her rights to make the disputed comments, in which Mills criticized the humane society for failing to conduct cruelty investigations, not spaying or neutering pets before adoption, and refusing to relinquish pets to no-kill rescue groups rather than killing them.

Days later, an anonymous complaint was filed with the Department of Agriculture, claiming Kitty Village was required to be licensed as a shelter.

***continued on next page***

**Secretary of State's Office Targets Cat Rescuer for Harassment**  
**Page 2**

Mike Lurey, the Department of Agriculture inspector who investigated the complaint, closed it immediately when Mills explained that Kitty Village is only a Web site.

The similarity of the two complaints leads Mills to suspect an individual or group is plotting to harass her.

"I have been rescuing cats and placing them in new homes for more than 10 years, and have operated the Kitty Village Web site for more than six years with no trouble," Mills said.

"Suddenly, over the course of a few months, a lawsuit and two complaints are filed. This makes me suspect that a coward who disagrees with my opinion about the Atlanta Humane Society is abusing government offices to harass me from behind a cloak of anonymity," she said.

"I intend to discover who is behind the complaints and determine if I can hold them legally accountable. However, the government has a responsibility to protect citizens from being victimized by people who file frivolous complaints because of personal vendettas, and Cathy Cox has not lived up to that responsibility."

**The true nature of Kitty Village**

Mills launched the Kitty Village Web site in August of 1996 to help rescue groups and independent cat rescuers in metro Atlanta publicize the cats they have for adoption. Hundreds of people have used Kitty Village to find new homes for rescued cats, or to adopt a cat.

Mills offers this service completely free of charge. She writes the content for, programs, and designs the graphics for the site by herself, and pays the costs of hosting out of her own pocket.

"Anyone who thinks Kitty Village is some sort of get-rich-quick scheme is nuts," Mills said. "I just want to reduce the number of cats who are being abandoned and killed in shelters, and Kitty Village has been a very useful tool for that."

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