

Jobs Versus Birds

Position One: Challenge the Endangered Species Act

As the owner of a small retail business in Oregon, you are very aware of how the health of other industries affects your business. You recently learned that because of the protection of the northern spotted owl by the Endangered Species Act, thirty thousand logging jobs and twenty thousand jobs in related industries could be lost. One of the jobs that might be lost is yours, since your business is frequented by many families of loggers. You have to decide if you are going to financially support an attempt to legally challenge the Endangered Species Act.

This is a difficult issue because you also have been concerned about environmental issues. You have been backpacking in logging areas and have seen the destruction, waste, and erosion caused by logging. You are concerned about the health of the environment and believe that our society is in danger because of environmental destruction.

You decide, however, that the probable loss of fifty thousand jobs is too great a price to pay to save one species of owl. These jobs are supporting families with children, supporting elderly people, and paying for medical services. You don't think you can justify sacrificing livelihoods for the sake of an owl.

Defend your position.

Position Two: Support the Endangered Species Act

As the owner of a small retail business in Oregon, you are very aware of how the health of other industries affects your business. You recently learned that because of the protection of the northern spotted owl by the Endangered Species Act, thirty thousand logging jobs and twenty thousand jobs in related industries could be lost. One of the jobs that might be lost is yours, since your business is frequented by many families of loggers. You have to decide if you are going to financially support an attempt to legally challenge the Endangered Species Act.

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You decide that despite the probable negative impact on your business, you have a moral obligation to support the process of saving the owl. While it would be difficult to lose a job now, the logging boom is going to be over sometime in the next twenty years anyway when the old growth forests are gone. You think that we may as well get ready now for a post-logging world. We cannot predict the future very well and we might find other, more environmentally harmonious ways of living. For example, the bark of the yew tree, which grows in these forests, has been found effective in treating some types of cancer. There may be other valuable species of plants and animals that we don't know about yet.

Defend your position.

Capital Punishment

Position One: Capital Punishment Is Necessary

Capital punishment (killing criminal offenders) is justified. For those people who commit the most violent and perverse crimes, capital punishment is the only answer. A crime demands justice, and the only way justice can be served for these violent crimes is execution.

Capital punishment serves as a deterrent to potential murderers. Without it, murderers would be guaranteed survival, something their victims are deprived of. Severe punishment generates respect for the law among people who don't have much respect for anything else.

Capital punishment also saves money, since prisons are expensive. We spend far too much money on people who have thrown their lives away.

Defend your position.

Position Two: Capital Punishment Is Unnecessary

Capital punishment is wrong. Murdering someone because he or she is a murderer is not a good practice. Do we rape rapists or burn down the homes of arsonists?

Giving the state the power to kill is dangerous. This power breaks down one more barrier of protection for the individual, especially individuals who are mistakenly convicted. Execution doesn't allow for correcting errors.

Capital punishment discriminates against the poor and minorities, since they are far more likely than wealthy whites to be sentenced to death for the same crime.

Capital punishment is not a deterrent. Western European countries do not have capital punishment and murder is rare. States in the United States that have capital punishment often have higher murder rates than those that don't.

Defend your position.

NIMBY (Not in My Backyard)

Position One: Transfer the Threat

You live in a pleasant, middle-class neighborhood of large, single-family homes and a few small apartment buildings. You have lived in your current home about five years. This home was a bit of a stretch for your budget, but you thought it was a safe investment should you want to sell it in a few years. You also have three young children and there is a good neighborhood school five blocks away. A few blocks away is a single-family home owned by Desert Ranch Homes, a nonprofit agency that provides residential services for developmentally disabled and retarded clients. They operate the program as a community-based group home. Recently your neighborhood group has been concerned because of a new resident of the group home who has been convicted of exposing himself to children and was once charged with a more serious offense, although the latter charges were later dropped. He served time in prison, successfully completed a rehabilitation program, and is continuing to receive therapy.

Believing that this man was a threat to their children, the neighborhood group protested to Desert Ranch Homes, requesting that this client be moved somewhere else. No response was given from Desert Homes management. The neighborhood group then began picketing the home. When asked, you agree to participate in the protest because of your concern about your own children.

Defend your position.

Position Two: Let Him Stay

You live in a pleasant, middle-class neighborhood of large, single-family homes and a few small apartment buildings. You have lived in your current home about five years. This home was a bit of a stretch for your budget, but you thought it was a safe investment should you want to sell it in a few years. You also have three young children and there is a good neighborhood school five blocks away. A few blocks away is a single-family home owned by Desert Ranch Homes, a nonprofit agency that provides residential services for developmentally disabled and retarded clients. They operate the program as a community-based group home. Recently your neighborhood group has been concerned because of a new resident of the group home who has been convicted of exposing himself to children and was once charged with a more serious offense, although the latter charges were later dropped. He served time in prison, successfully completed a rehabilitation program, and is continuing to receive therapy.

Believing that this man was a threat to their children, the neighborhood group protested to Desert Ranch Homes, requesting that this client be moved somewhere else. No response was given from Desert Homes management. The neighborhood group then began picketing the home. When asked to participate, you refuse because you believe that the protests are violating the man's civil rights. Even though you have some concerns, you believe that because he has served his time he should be left alone.

Defend your position.

E-Mail Etiquette

This scenario was adapted from the *New York Times*, 8 Dec. 1991.

Position One: Respect the Privacy of Communication

When Alana Shoars arrived for work at Epson America, Inc., one morning in January 1990, she discovered her supervisor reading and printing out electronic mail messages between other employees. As electronic mail administrator, Ms. Shoars was appalled. When she had trained employees to use the computerized system, Ms. Shoars told them their mail was private. Now a company manager was violating that trust. You don't read other people's mail, Ms. Shoars believes, just as you don't listen to their phone conversations. Right is right, and wrong is wrong.

Michael Simmons, chief information officer at the Bank of Boston, disagrees completely. If the corporation owns the equipment and pays for the network, that asset belongs to the company, and the company has a right to look and see if people are using it for purposes other than running the business. Mr. Simmons says that at a previous job, he discovered an employee using the computer system to handicap horses, and another running an Amway business on company time.

You believe that electronic mail has the same status as paper mail and that reading it is a violation of the employee's privacy. Employers don't go through employee desks looking for information and they shouldn't look through their electronic mail.

Defend your position.

Position Two: E-Mail Is Public Communication

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As the internal computer consultant for your corporation, you agree with Mr. Simmons. Computer networks are designed for business use. Monitoring the network is not unusual supervision practice and is ethical.

Defend your position.