

## Law Day 2009:

# “A Legacy of Liberty – Celebrating Lincoln’s Bicentennial”

For this year’s Law Day, the Committee on Law Youth and Citizenship (LYC) and the Committee on Animals and the Law of the New York State Bar Association teamed up to honor President Lincoln by exploring a less well-known aspect of his character: his deep love of animals and the far-reaching influence that has had on the growing field of animal law.

In preparation for the May 1 event, the State Bar launched a Web site containing information, lesson plans and classroom resources to help educators in New York observe Law Day in their classrooms; and to satisfy N.Y. Education Law, Article 17, § 809, which mandates instruction in the humane treatment of animals.

In his essay, written to accompany the NYSBA’s Law Day activities, James F. Gesualdi, chair of the Committee on Animals and the Law, notes that the Lincoln White House was filled with pets – cats, kittens, dogs, and later a turkey and even a couple of goats. As a child Lincoln would intervene if he saw other children treating an animal cruelly. As an adult, Lincoln would halt his travels to rescue a baby bird fallen from its nest. He asked troops under General Grant’s command to care for the orphaned kittens that were abandoned at the barracks, and he was known to treat his pets as family members. One of the family dogs, Fido, was the first presidential

pet to sit for an official portrait. Lincoln’s son Tad was so distraught by the thought that his pet turkey would be killed for Thanksgiving dinner, Lincoln officially pardoned the bird, starting a presidential tradition still observed today. Gesualdi also recommends a beautifully illustrated children’s book, Ellen Jackson’s *Abe Lincoln Loved Animals* (illustrated by Doris Ettlinger), which weaves together accounts of Lincoln and animals.

The collaboration between the LYC and the Animals and the Law Committee yielded an unusual and fascinating opportunity to learn about Lincoln the man. Information, lesson plans and classroom resources can be found at [www.nysba.org/lawday2009](http://www.nysba.org/lawday2009).

Established in 1958 by President Eisenhower, Law Day is the annual commemoration of the importance of the role of law in our society. The Committee on Animals and the Law was established to provide an information resource for the State Bar’s members, governments and the public about non-human, animal-related humane issues which arise from and have an effect upon our legal system. The State Bar also houses the Law, Youth and Citizenship Program ([www.lycny.org](http://www.lycny.org)), which has provided civic education resources to teachers and classes throughout New York for three decades. ■