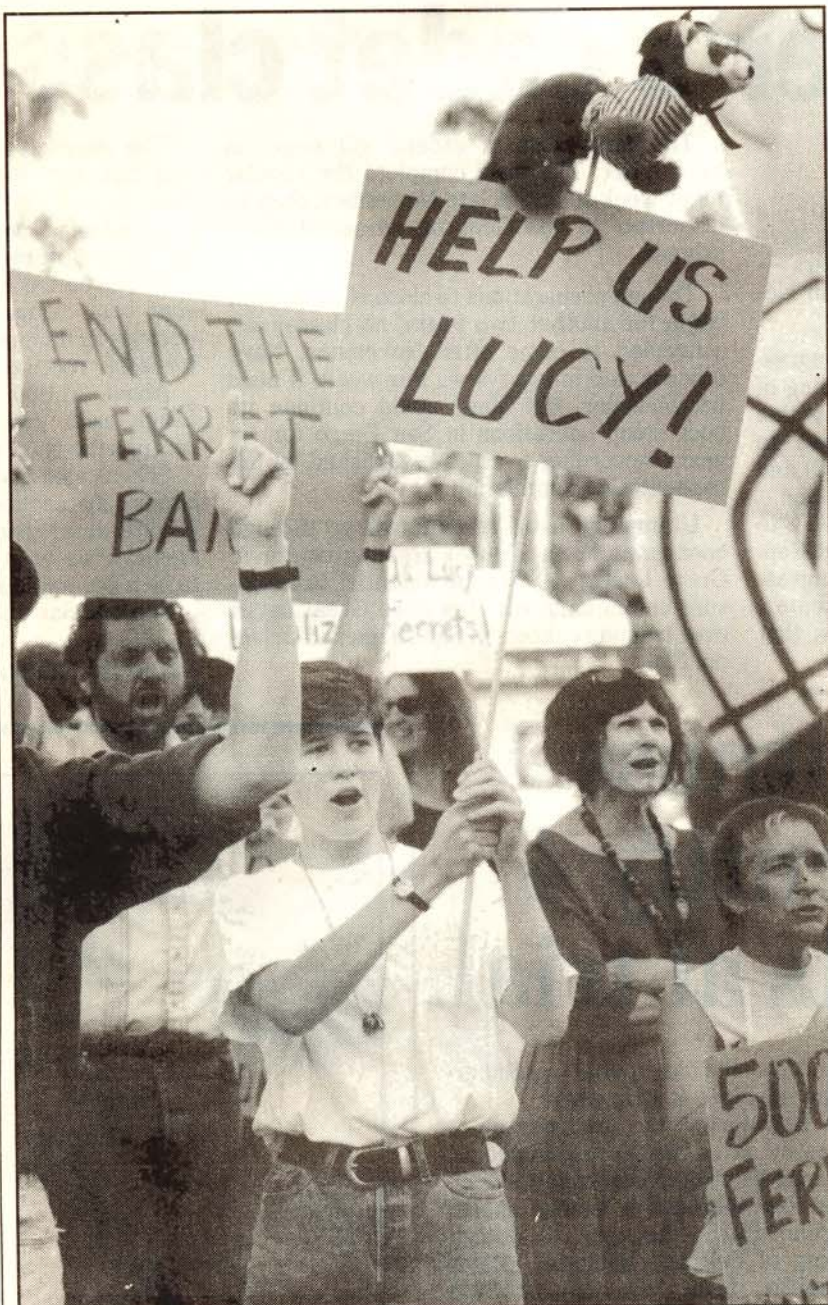


San Diego

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Union-Tribune / JOHN GIBBINS

Point illustrated: *Laura Hartman uses a toy ferret to emphasize her plea to state Sen. Lucy Killea.*

40 ferret fans try to nose out help for legalizing pets

By JACK WILLIAMS, Staff Writer

They came, some 40 strong, to campaign, chant and root, root, root for their ferrets: the one household pet that gets about as much respect from the state of California as a common criminal.

But what was billed as the first ferret legalization rally in California went a lot farther than unleashing frustrations and airing pet peeves.

For the uninitiated, a ferret is a weasel-like mammal, and owning one in California is a misdemeanor.

These outlaw ferret owners and sympathizers who noisily gathered in Hillcrest yesterday afternoon were bringing their argument straight to someone who can do something about it: state Sen. Lucy Killea, I-San Diego.

A massive banner was unveiled outside Killea's office, emblazoned across the expansive torso of an inflatable man known as Mr. Big.

"HEY, SENATOR KILLEA, HOW ABOUT FERRETING OUT A LITTLE JUSTICE," it implored in black letters on a pink background.

Killea, meanwhile, was on a plane to San Diego from Sacramento and wouldn't arrive in time for the rally, said one of her aides, Stephen Hill.

"We have no philosophical differences with these people," said Mike Nelson, another Killea aide. "But there are a lot of issues to deal with, and some think it is the most important one in the state."

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