

# Family Court Chronicles.com

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Opinion #16

What the newspapers won't tell you!

January 16, 2007

Special Collector's Edition

# Barbara Buckley: PURE EVIL

**Now more evil  
than ever!**

**...The Sequel!**

***"The Bully of Family Court"  
becomes Speaker of the  
Nevada Assembly. Will more  
children be crushed in her  
blind pursuit of power?***

BY GLENN CAMPBELL

Barbara Buckley is still the Number One enemy of child welfare in Nevada.

It has been almost 9 months since Family Court Chronicles first exposed this fact in our Opinion #3 on the Baby Sosa case. That was when Buckley recruited indifferent relatives to take a child away from the only parents she had ever known. It wasn't about protecting families or children; it was a naked play for political power at Family Court.

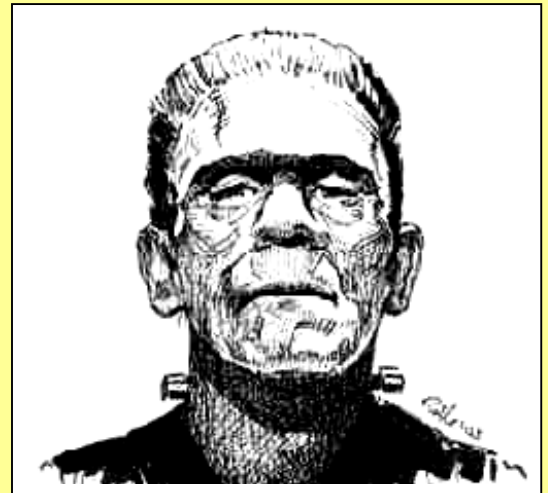
Now Buckley is bringing her horror

show back to Carson City, as she assumes the role of Assembly Speaker, one of the most powerful and potentially destructive positions in the state. With her new-found political clout, she is pursuing a perverse agenda of "child rights," no matter how many children she has to crush along the way.

In a variety of crude and ill-considered legislation that she is clearly masterminding, Buckley is seeking to micro-manage Clark County child welfare from Carson City.

One proposal would bar kids under 6 from Child Haven. Another would effectively limit the total number of children that can be placed there. Well, darlings, if kids can't go to Child Haven when no other placements are available, where are they going to go? How about Barbara's house!

Buckley, who has been given an



*She's not as sweet as she looks.*

extraordinary free pass by our local press, has built a carefully crafted public image as a friend of children and families. Nothing could be further from the truth. Buckley's role in Family Court shouldn't surprise anyone who knows her: She is a bully, pure and simple.

There is nothing wrong with being a

fierce advocate for children, but Buckley is a fierce advocate for nothing but her own power. Her history shows that she has no grasp of the complexities of child welfare, only an unmatched skill at publicity, politics and public opinion. She is one of the many critics who stand glibly on the outside of child welfare and throws stones, and pending legislation would only give her bigger stones to throw.

What other legislator has an opportunity to pass a bill, then go home and start using it immediately in their day job for their own benefit?

Buckley already controls—and woefully mismanages—the county-funded Children’s Attorney Project (CAP). This is the well-meaning and supposedly independent program to give children in the foster care system their own attorneys to represent their stated wishes. It is supposed to allow these children to “take an active role (and responsibility) in their own destiny,” according to the CAP website.

This makes sense when a child is 12 or 14, has stable wishes and can express them to his lawyer. It becomes murky and politically motivated when much younger children are represented.

Time after time in Family Court, we see the absurdity of a CAP attorney with no child psychology background telling a judge what he thinks a child as young as 3 wants, based only on “talking to the child.” (See RJ, 1/9/07.) So what does a child this young want? Anything his attorney wants him to want.

There is a word to describe the Children’s Attorney Project under Barbara Buckley: incompetent.

We don’t mean that everyone there is incompetent. There are a couple of attorneys who are trying their best to represent the older children they have been assigned to, but it is hard to do your best when you are working in the structure of Jello that Barbara has given them. The first priority of the CAP program is not protecting children but supporting Barbara’s political career.

In the Sosa case, she used a CAP attorney to argue against the best interests of the child to initiate a court appeal that clearly hurt the child but

supported her own political agenda.

In practice, Barbara’s CAP program is like a bunch of chickens with their heads cut off. They make a lot of noise in court and in the press but rarely accomplish anything that wouldn’t have happened without them. There is no sign of any moral maturity or leadership at the top, only a simpleminded philosophy of doing whatever serves Barbara’s interests.

The CAP program isn’t an independent protector of children and never will be as long as the Assembly Speaker controls it.

Child welfare in Clark County has been deeply troubled, due mainly to systemic overload, lack of resources and years of political neglect by Buckley, *et al.* In 2004, foster care was transferred from the state to the county. The transition has been rough, but no one can argue that the state, directly supervised by the legislature, did a better job of serving our children.

The theory of transferring control to the county is that local officials are better in touch with local needs and can respond faster and more creatively to new problems. Now, Barbara wants to reverse that trend.

These bills are well-meaning but naïve. Legislators who know little about child welfare think that if their heart is in the right place they can manage it better than professional administrators hired by the county.

It doesn’t make sense to give control and discretion to the county and then take it away in bits and pieces. This is the worse sort of democratic tyranny, where some hot issue in the news gets people all worked up, so the legislature passes a simpleminded law—like “No child shall suffer.”—which ends up making things even worse.

Right now, the legislature is responding hysterically to the problems of last year, when Child Haven was overflowing with kids. Now that those numbers have been reduced, Family Services is being rewarded by new onerous meddling from Carson City.

Every noble-sounding law can have bad potential effects, a concept that Barbara can’t grasp, especially for

legislation that she passed herself.

Some children are currently suffering because of the ham-handed legislation from the last session. Barbara championed the law that forces the county to place siblings together in foster care and adoption. But what if you have a family of seven kids and no foster home to take them? They are going to have to stay longer in Child Haven, and good placements may have to be overlooked.

It’s not her problem, Barbara told the L.V. Sun on 12/10/05. “It’s kind of offensive to say the law is at fault,” she said. “It is the county’s job to recruit homes willing to take large groups.”

The legislature can pass a million different restrictions on how Clark County officials do their jobs, but there is no law in the world that can pull high-quality foster families out of thin air. Las Vegas isn’t Des Moines or Denver, and local officials need the freedom to adapt to our unique circumstances.

Barbara knows how to play to the press, however. Theatrical anger, simplistic appeals to the emotions and melodramatic publicity stunts (like the recent one-time effort to represent all unplaced infants) continue to get her ahead. Whatever power she has, she always wants more, more, more.

There is no perfect solution to child welfare. The needs are always overwhelming, and you have to make subtle and creative compromises to address the problems of each child. No matter how bad things may be in Clark County, it is assinine to think that the legislature, meeting every two years and having no child welfare experience, can manage things better from Carson City,

Local child welfare needs more resources and more tools from the state. It does not need Big Brother telling it how to best protect its children.

—GC

*Funding Appeal:* We would love go to Carson City to fight the scourge of Barbara Buckley, but we can do it only with your financial support (mainly for airfare and car rental). Donations are graciously accepted. 702-812-0400