

What's in a name? Ask GoVeg.com

By Nara Schoenberg
KRT CAMPUS

CHICAGO — When the animal-rights activist formerly known as Karin Robertson arrives at the airline check-in counter, the conversation goes something like this:

"What is your name?"

"GoVeg.com."

"Is that your first name or your last name?"

"It's just GoVeg.com."

"Uhhh, let's take a look at your I.D."

In March, Robertson, 23, of Norfolk, Va., legally changed her name to that of a major vegetarian Web site, a move she hopes will draw attention to the plight of farm animals that she says are raised in cramped quarters and subjected to painful procedures.

"There's a little bit of laughing every time somebody says my name, and that's great, you know?" GoVeg.com said over lunch at a Chicago vegetarian restaurant.

"I love it. When people call for me across a busy room, or when I sign a check, or when I go pay my electricity or rent, everybody has that (anti-meat) message taken down."

It's unclear how rare such name changes are, but nothing similar has come to the attention of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), owner of GoVeg.com the Web site, and employer of GoVeg.com, the person, according to PETA.

U.S. Social Security Administration spokeswoman Martha McNish said her agency doesn't track names with punctuation, but said her co-workers do not recall inquiries about similar name changes.

Among those who have greeted the name change with skepticism is GoVeg.com's mother, a kindergarten teacher in Culver, Ind. "But your name's so pretty," she protested. And then: "What are you going to do when you're married?"

In an interview with the Chicago Tribune, a spokeswoman for the National Pork Producers Council called the name change a "desperate" publicity ploy.

"It's an outrageous tactic is what it is, sort of the way a child screams



Animal rights activist Karin Robertson of Norfolk, Va., had her name legally changed to GoVeg.com. That is also the Web site address for her employer PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).

until you feed them," spokeswoman Kara Flynn said.

But GoVeg.com, who said she has changed her name with the city of Norfolk, the Virginia department of motor vehicles, her bank, her landlord, the electric company and her credit card company, remains firm in her conviction that she is doing the right thing.

"The average farm is a factory farm with over a million individuals under one roof: chickens and pigs who live their whole lives inside in cages so small they can't turn around. Chickens live about eight to 10 in a cage the size of a file drawer. That's where they spend their existence, and I know that people who learn about these things are not willing to accept (them)," she said. "And that's why I changed my name."

GoVeg.com's name change caps nearly a decade of ardent vegetarianism that began with a school project when she was 14. While researching cosmetic testing on ani-

mals, she came upon a book with a section on "factory farms," large, economically efficient animal-raising operations.

"This cannot be true!" she called from the living room to the kitchen, where her mother was cooking sausage.

"This cannot be what animals go through," she said, as she read about "chickens having their beaks cut off with a hot blade when they're one day old, piglets having their teeth ripped out with pliers and castrated without anesthetic, just as general practices."

It's true that piglets are castrated with no anesthetic, but researchers haven't yet determined whether the process is painful, according to Anna Johnson, director of animal welfare at the National Pork Board. Johnson acknowledged that sows are kept in cages in which they can't turn around, but disputed the claim that piglets' teeth are ripped out. She said the sharp tips of the animals' teeth are clipped off, in a process

that is not painful.

Growing up in rural Indiana, the fourth child of a teacher and a biologist, GoVeg.com had never known another vegetarian. But immediately after reading about factory farms, she stopped eating meat and eggs. At Bucknell University, where she was an animal behavior major, she stopped eating dairy products as well.

GoVeg.com said she had considered changing her name for so long, she can't pinpoint the exact moment of inspiration, although it came long before her she landed a job at PETA, where she is the organization's youth projects specialist.

"I always wanted to leave people with something other than, is your name Karin or Karen or Caryn? Nobody could ever pronounce my name right," she said.

She began the process of changing her name in March, after a recently divorced friend told her how to register a change with the city of Norfolk.

Thousands of former workers sue Enron

By Kristen Hays
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — A committee representing thousands of former Enron Corp. workers abruptly laid off when the company collapsed is suing nearly 300 former executives, traders and others who scooped up more than \$72 million in hastily arranged bonuses within days of the company's bankruptcy filing.

"Even as thousands of regular Enron employees and retirees were facing the loss of life savings, health benefits, their jobs or pensions, these favored few were scheming to get millions more for themselves," said Richard Rathvon, co-chairman of the committee, who lost his job along with 4,500 others.

Four lawsuits, filed by the group earlier this year in federal bankruptcy court in Houston and recently consolidated, say most of the individual

bonuses ranged from \$200,000 to \$5 million. Some were five figures. A former top trader's bonus rose to \$8 million about two weeks before Enron filed for bankruptcy on Dec. 2, 2001, after six weeks of revelations of hidden debt, inflated profits and shady accounting.

Laid-off employees ultimately received up to \$13,500 each — less than many were entitled to under Enron policy.

"We are out there now to restore fairness to the severed employees," Rathvon said Wednesday.

The lawsuits allege that 286 upper-level executives, managers and traders had employment contracts amended in October and November 2001, as Enron careened into bankruptcy, to ensure they pocketed large bonuses before they would have to be approved by a bankruptcy judge after the Chapter 11 case was filed on Dec. 2, 2001.

The employees also allege the bonus checks didn't clear Enron's account until after the bank-

ruptcy was filed, so they should be returned. Most checks were doled out the Friday before the Sunday filing.

"If they can demonstrate that the officers, without justification, awarded themselves significant money before Enron crashed and burned, then they have a fairly good chance of recovering," said Anthony Sabino, an expert in bankruptcy and energy law at St. John's University.

But Tom Kirkendall, an attorney for former Enron executive Jeffrey McMahon, who is among defendants named in the retention suits, said the bonuses were justified. He said \$1.5 million paid to McMahon days before Enron went bankrupt is comparable to the \$1.3 million paid annually to restructuring expert and interim Enron chief executive Stephen Cooper.

"A reorganization is often lost if the debtor cannot retain key management personnel," Kirkendall said.

Texas lottery situation still up for grabs

By Jim Vertuno
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — The odds of Texas joining the multi-state lotteries are dwindling fast.

Lotto Texas Executive Director Reagan Greer said Wednesday he's not yet ready to recommend which multi-state lottery Texas should join, but said his ultimate decision will not include trying to join more than one.

The state is considering whether to join the Powerball or Mega Millions games and state lottery commission Chairman C. Thomas Clowe surprised many last month when he suggested Texas could try to join both.

Greer said that while Powerball officials say they would consider such an option, Mega Millions officials were "very uncomfortable" with the idea.

"They just didn't like it for their game as a whole," Greer said. "I will not be recommending (joining) both."

Penny Kyle, director of the Virginia Lottery and current president of Mega Millions group, said a move to join both would have been unprecedented.

"We had a long conversation about if this was something we wanted to get into," Kyle said. "I don't think any state in the union had ever considered joining both. Leave it to Texas to do something different."

Greer said he could be ready with a recommendation as early as Aug. 4, although the commission did not immediately schedule its next meeting.

Multi-state lottery games are designed to generate jackpots into the hundreds of millions of dollars, creating a frenzy of ticket purchases across the country. Participating states get a share of the tickets sold within their borders.

The push to join a multi-state lottery comes as Lotto Texas, the state's signature game, continues to suffer from depressed ticket sales. This spring lottery officials increased the odds against winning a jackpot from one in 25 million to nearly one in 48 million.

Powerball and Mega Millions officials made presentations to lottery commissioners in June and Greer originally hoped to make his recommendation at Wednesday's meeting.

Greer said he needed more time for study, particularly on how joining a multistate game might "cannibalize" players and money away from Lotto Texas.

"That's a huge issue," Greer said. "What's going to do to the other games?"

Kyle suggested that by joining both, Texas would create so-called "player fatigue" with too many big jackpots.

Greer said he's already received more than 1,000 e-mails and other correspondence from the public, most of it in favor of joining a multistate lottery.

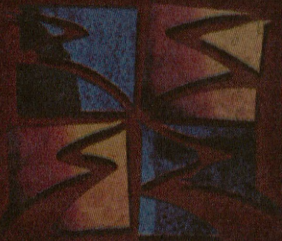
Powerball drawings are on Wednesday and Saturday nights, the same as Lotto Texas. Mega Millions drawings are on Tuesday and Friday nights.

Texas also could decide to not join either group, although the Legislature wrote the 2003-05 budget counting on the estimated \$101 million that joining a multi-state game would bring. Greer said he would recommend joining one of the two groups.

Any recommendation he makes will still need the approval of the three-member commission.

"This an interesting time," Clowe said. The decision "is something that's going to change a lot of things."

Powerball is a consortium of lotteries in 23 states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Mega Millions is made up of 15 states.



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