

OPINION



SCISSORTALES | OUR OPINIONS TAKE FLIGHT

Not all are pinched by recession

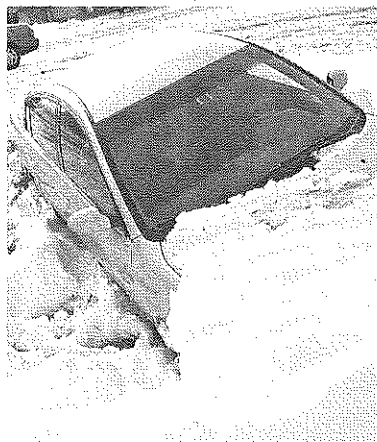
BANKRUPTCY filings were up 27 percent in Oklahoma last year and, as judged by one indicator, civil lawsuit filings are up as well.

The two trends are connected: During economic downturns, civil courts are swamped with foreclosure actions and lawsuits seeking to collect unpaid debts.

Lawsuit filings in Oklahoma were also likely affected by tort reform legislation that went into effect Nov. 1. Some law firms even exploited the deadline, urging potential litigants to race to the courthouse before the reform law took effect. In one jurisdiction, Tulsa County, 2009 saw 21,141 lawsuit filings, up by nearly 1,300 cases from 2008, according to the Tulsa World.

The tort reform law capped non-economic damages at \$400,000 in most cases. It also created a state indemnity fund to cover payments when the cap is exceeded under special circumstances. So now lawmakers must find a way to pay for the fund at a time when revenues are tight for the same reason that bankruptcy filings are high and more lawsuits are being filed in response to hard times.

This seems to be a case of "When it rains, it pours." For lawyers, though, the recession appears to be a rainmaker — creating income opportunities at a time when the citizenry is learning to make do with less.

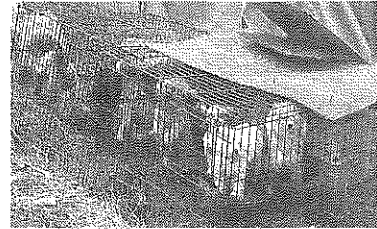


An abandoned car last month in Oklahoma City

members and one of the coolest, wettest Octobers. We had ice storms in January, tornadoes in February, snowstorms in late March and wildfires in April. A drought plagued the state until heavy rains plagued the state. The year ended with a blizzard and record snowfall. Remind us again why we live here! Must be those mild days with gentle breezes and glorious sunsets. We just need more of them. Starting now!

Weather or not

The December to remember is in the books and we hope those books will stay closed. Ditto for the entire year. So far, 2010 isn't so hot. How we miss global warming! Last year, one of the coldest Decembers on record followed one of the warmest No-



More than 100 dogs were rescued from a Delaware County puppy mill.

group that doesn't resort to cheap street theater tactics to get attention (as does PETA), says it was a banner year for animals. Cited are no-kill pet population control programs, crackdowns on puppy mills and organized animal fighting, large-scale rescues of animals in crisis, increased scrutiny of abusive activities at factory farms and curtailment of commercial killing of seals, polar bears, etc. On the other hand, many of us celebrated the new year with a ham dinner — just one week after feasting on turkey. At least our dogs got a few scraps from the holiday table.

Banner year

We know what kind of year 2009 was for humans, but what about God's other creatures? The Humane Society of the United States, the animal rights

Fostering help

The practice of asking churches to help serve the needy has been going on for ages. In especially tough times, it's reassuring to see the state and faith communities working together to help those who need it most. A recent example of that is an announcement that state and county Department of Human Services officials will work with Ada-area churches to make sure the needs of foster children are being met. The agency said about 70 children are in foster care in the area. We have no doubt the churches will step up and reach out.