

Company “Campaigns” to Change California’s State Bird from Quail to Parrot

“Parrot for State Bird” initiative corresponds with state’s new cell phone law

By Katie Ingmire

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California residents probably have a better chance of running into Angelina Jolie at the grocery store than sighting an African grey parrot in their backyards. While the odds may be unfavorable, they haven’t deterred one group - a Paris-based company campaigning to make the parrot the new state bird of California.

The company, conveniently named Parrot S.A., launched the “Parrot for State Bird” campaign last month to bring awareness to California’s hands-free driving law, which took effect July 1. Under the new law, drivers on California roadways cannot talk on a hand-held cell phone while on the road. Hands-free sets, such as Bluetooth® devices, are still allowed for motorists 18 and over. Parrot designs and markets hands-free cell phone kits.

Alison Koski, a media contact for the company, said Parrot decided to promote the law in the form of a campaign because a campaign would be “something that would stick to people’s minds and get their attention.”

“The purpose is not really to change the state bird,” Koski said. “It was really to get people to think about the fact that this (legislation) is happening and what people could do to be prepared for it.”

While the company isn’t trying to dethrone the valley quail, California’s state bird since 1931, it has utilized political tactics in the process. Visitors to the campaign website, parrotnotquail.com, can watch a YouTube video of a debate pitting the “status quo” quail against a parrot “flapping for change.” Also available on the site are ‘testimonies’ claiming “Parrot turned my life around” and a petition visitors can sign to support the cause.

Koski said people have been receptive to the campaign, and the company has not encountered those taking serious offense to charges against the valley quail.

“I think most people that have seen it have noted that it’s a really funny, interesting way to draw attention,” Koski said. “It’s a good thing for a quick laugh.”

Parrot’s arguments against the valley quail range from the bird’s affinity to take dust baths to its tendency to make Californians “look lazy, easily distracted, and desperate for worms.” The company promotes Parrot on the majority of the site, however, helping make obvious that the campaign is simply promoting its business, along with safe driving techniques.

“We meant no harm to quails,” Koski said. “At the end of the day the goal was to educate drivers ... to meet the demands of this legislation.”