

TO: The Cook County State's Attorney, The Honorable Judge Sharon Kanter, The Mayor of Chicago, The Illinois State Legislators, The Cook County Board of Commissioners, The Citizens of Wicker Park and Cook County

FROM: Animal Victory **Petition:** <https://animalvictory.org/petition/sign-shelly-kitten-killer-squeezed-drowned-and-microwaved-kittens-to-death/>

Who We Are

- Animal Victory is a national animal advocacy organization that has fought for justice in over 390 animal cruelty cases across the United States.
- We submit verified petitions to judges, district attorneys, and elected officials demanding accountability when animals are tortured and killed.
- This letter concerns Case Number 23CR0852301, Cook County, Illinois: Thomas William Martel.
- This is one of the absolute worst sentencing outcomes we have ever witnessed in the history of our organization.

TOGETHER, OVER 61,000 PEOPLE DEMANDED JUSTICE FOR THIS CASE AND WERE FAILED.

- Animal Victory petition: **38,936 verified supporters**
- The Garrido Stray Rescue Foundation (<https://www.garridostrayrescue.org>): **over 22,700 supporters**
- **Combined total: over 61,000 people**
- Wicker Park, where these crimes were committed, has a population of approximately **24,000 residents**. Over 61,000 people, more than **twice the entire population of that neighborhood**, demanded justice for this case. The court chose to ignore every one of them.

The State's Attorney's Office was directly notified. On March 17, 2025, Animal Victory submitted our petition to the assigned prosecutors. Assistant State's Attorney Karan Baltazar responded in writing:

"We have received your email and petition and will present it to the judge at the appropriate time." — Karan Baltazar, Assistant State's Attorney, Cook County

The petition was received. It was acknowledged. The judge was informed. And this is still the outcome they chose.

This was not a single submission. Animal Victory submitted this petition to the court and prosecutors **six times over nearly three years**, with a growing number of supporters each time. A physical flash drive containing all signatures was also mailed to be carried directly into the courtroom.

Date	Action	Signatures Delivered
October 10, 2023	Petition submitted to the judge	18,657
March 11, 2024	Petition resubmitted to the judge	22,018
June 18, 2024	Cover letter and petition submitted to the judge	Updated count
January 12, 2025	Petition submitted to assigned attorneys	22,694
February 2, 2025	Petition submitted with physical flash drive mailed to court	23,331
March 17, 2025	Petition submitted — confirmed received in writing by ASA Karan Baltazar	Updated count
January 19, 2026	Final petition submitted with physical flash drive mailed to court	38,936

Every submission was documented. Every one was received. The court knew exactly how many people were watching. They chose this outcome anyway.

What Happened: The Facts

- Thomas William Martel, age 25, of Wicker Park, Chicago, was arrested in July 2023.
- He was charged with multiple felony counts of animal torture and aggravated cruelty to animals.
- He admitted to his girlfriend that he enjoyed killing cats and had been doing so since he was eight years old.
- He purchased kittens through Craigslist, named each one Shelly, and tortured and killed them.

- Methods of killing included drowning, squeezing to death, and putting kittens in a microwave.
- He bought look alike replacement kittens each time to conceal his crimes.
- Officers found a bag in his pantry containing the remains of multiple kittens.
- The evidence was overwhelming. The confession was on record. The facts were never in dispute.

How Long This Took: Three Years of Deliberate Delays

- From arrest in July 2023 to sentencing on June 22, 2026, the case dragged on for nearly three years.
- Martel and his defense attorney filed repeated motions for continuance, deliberately prolonging the case.
- Martel reportedly smiled at advocates in the courtroom after obtaining continuances.
- Every delay was calculated: each day at home on electronic monitoring would later count as credit against his sentence.

Sentencing Day Finally Came and This Is What He Got

- On June 22, 2026, Martel pleaded guilty to one count of animal torture and one count of aggravated cruelty to animals.
- Judge Sharon Kanter sentenced him to 54 months (4.5 years).
- He received 1,079 days of credit for time spent on electronic monitoring at home.
- Illinois law then reduced the remaining sentence by 50%.
- **Result: Thomas Martel served zero days in an actual prison cell.**
- Home confinement is not prison. He slept in his own bed, in his own home, wearing an ankle bracelet.

What It Sounds Like	What It Actually Means
4.5 year (54 month) sentence	Sounds serious
Minus 1,079 days credit for electronic monitoring	He was HOME the entire time
Minus Illinois 50% sentence reduction	Cuts remaining time in half
Result: Zero days in prison	He walks free

For comparison, here is what Illinois law actually allowed:

Charge	Class	Standard Maximum	Extended Term Maximum
Animal Torture (510 ILCS 70/3.03)	Class 3 Felony	5 years	10 years
Aggravated Cruelty to Animals (510 ILCS 70/3.02)	Class 4 Felony	3 years	6 years

- He was originally charged with 9 felony counts. Had he been convicted at trial and sentenced consecutively on all counts, he could have faced up to **74 years in prison**.
- Even on the 2 counts he actually pleaded to, the law allowed a combined extended term maximum of 16 years in prison. **He served zero. The prosecution had the power to demand it. The judge had the authority to impose it. Neither happened.**

How This Happened: Who Is Responsible

- **The DA's office** originally offered the 54 month plea deal, then withdrew it to pursue a trial.
- On the morning of jury selection, the judge announced she would honor the withdrawn deal anyway.
- The prosecution accepted it rather than fighting for a trial, after three years of case preparation.
- **Judge Kanter** was not required to honor a withdrawn plea deal. She chose to.
- The defense attorney's strategy of deliberate delay worked exactly as intended.
- The system was gamed, and no one stopped it.

Why Would You Do This? Even the Defendant Admitted It.

- **Martel admitted to his girlfriend that he enjoyed killing cats since he was eight years old.**
- **Why Would You Allow a Confessed Serial Animal Torturer to Walk Free Without a Single Day in a Prison Cell?**

Does Anyone Know the Link Between Animal Abuse and Violence Against People?

- The FBI has documented for decades that animal cruelty is one of the most reliable predictors of escalating violence against human beings.
 - Men who abused animals were five times more likely to be arrested for violence toward humans and four times more likely to commit property crimes.
 - Martel admitted to killing animals since he was eight years old. He is 25 today.
 - **THIS community is not protected. The next victims will be more kittens, and the odds are people next.**
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This Is What You Did to the Good People

- The Garrido Stray Rescue Foundation worked with sweat and tears, protesting and fighting for justice within their own neighborhood, their own community, for nearly three years.
 - They showed up to every hearing. They sat through every delay. They watched this defendant smile at them from across the courtroom after every continuance.
 - On sentencing day, this system looked them in the eye and delivered a message loud and clear.
 - **You told them: We want the man that microwaves kittens in our community.**
 - **You told them: We want this man to be free.**
 - **You told them: We do not want your rescue work.**
 - You punished the rescue group and praised the killer.
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Do Any of You Have a Kitten or Cat or Dog? Do Your Children or Grandchildren Love Kittens or Cats or Dogs?

- If yes, sit down with those children or grandchildren and tell them exactly what Thomas Martel did.
 - Tell them he put kittens in a microwave. Tell them he drowned them. Tell them he squeezed them to death.
 - Tell them he did this over and over again for 17 years, buying new kittens each time to replace the ones he killed.
 - Tell them he admitted to enjoying it since he was eight years old.
 - **Then tell them what his punishment was and ask them if they agree.**
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Can Anyone on This List Provide an Explanation for Over 61,000 People?

- Is it possible that not one of you, or a single member of your family, owns a cat or a dog?
- Does anyone care? Are you aware that all of you were elected to protect the people and this community?
- We are asking, respectfully but urgently, that at least one person on this list respond to this letter. Just one. Over 61,000 people are waiting for an answer.
- If you were not responsible for this outcome, say so. Tell us what happened. Tell us who failed and why. We will listen, and we will make that answer known to every single one of our over 61,000 supporters.
- We also have an email list of over 300,000 people we will inform.
- If no one responds, that silence will be its own answer, and we will make certain that over 61,000 people know the names of everyone who received this letter and chose to say nothing.

Sincerely,

Janelle Babington Founder and CEO Animal Victory 1319 Military Cutoff Road, Suite CC, Unit #101 Wilmington, NC 28405 800-634-3439 Info@animalvictory.org

COMPLETE RECIPIENT EMAIL LIST

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Assistant State's Attorneys assigned to Case 23CR0852301:

- Karan Baltazar: karan.baltazar@cookcountysao.org | Phone: 847-470-7320
- Gabriella Morris
- Danielle Levin

Additional case-specific and general contact emails:

- skokiecourtroom108-StatesAttorney@cookcountysao.org
- Skokiedist2crimservices@cookcountycourt.com
- Contact form: <https://www.cookcountystatesattorney.org/form/contact-webform>

Judge Sharon Kanter — (no public email by court policy; written correspondence via court clerk) cccwebsite@cookcountycourt.com | George N. Leighton Criminal Courthouse, 2600 S. California Ave., Chicago, IL 60608

Mayor of Chicago — Brandon Johnson press@cityofchicago.org | Phone: (312) 744-5000

Cook County Board President — Toni Preckwinkle info@tonipreckwinkle.org | Phone: (312) 603-6400

Cook County Board of Commissioners — Master email for all commissioners
cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

District	Commissioner	Email
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Illinois State Senator — Omar Aquino (Senate District 2, Wicker Park)
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Illinois State Representative — Will Guzzardi (House District 39, Wicker Park area)
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Chicago Alderman, 1st Ward (Wicker Park) — Daniel La Spata info@the1stward.com |
Ward01@cityofchicago.org | Phone: (872) 206-2685

U.S. Congressman, Illinois 5th District (Wicker Park) — Mike Quigley
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