The ABA Award for Outstanding Legislative Action: Introduction of the Presenter

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On May 21, 1986, the Executive Council of the Association for Behavior Analysis voted unanimously to create an award for outstanding action by an elected or appointed public official. This award will be presented at ceremonies during the Annual Convention, but only if earned. Therefore, there may be no award some years, and more than one in others depending on the behavior of America's public servants. The Council also voted that the first recipient of the Award for Effective Legislative Action would be Hon. Marlin Schneider of the Wisconsin State Legislature.

The impetus for these actions by the Council came entirely from Mark Kane Goldstein, a scientist, businessman, and public servant living in Gainesville, Florida. Dr. Goldstein was serving as mayor of the City of Gainesville in 1981 when B. F. Skinner visited the University of Florida and made the first public presentation of his now classic paper, "Why Are We Not Acting to Save the World?" As

mayor, Dr. Goldstein presented the Key to the City to Professor Skinner and, during his second term as an elected commissioner, employed many of Skinner's principles to create enlightened legislation which enhanced the effectiveness of public service delivery.

As a trained behavior analyst, Dr. Goldstein has frequently commented on the utility of reinforcing successive approximations of appropriate behavior on the part of public servants. It was his remarkable insight that the Association for Behavior Analysis is uniquely qualified to perform this function, guided as it is by a view of the human condition that is firmly anchored in a natural science of behavior. "Selection by consequences" as a means of modifying the repertoires of those in power is a proper application of our science and may hasten the day when elected and appointed officials base their actions on that science's principles.

It is therefore fitting that the first ABA Award for Outstanding Legislative Action be presented by the first behavior analyst popularly elected to public office—my colleague, business associate, and cherished friend, Mark Kane Goldstein.

Adapted from remarks made by Dr. Pennypacker at the 12th Annual Convention of the Association for Behavior Analysis, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 26, 1986.