ABA book explores the concept of injustice with compelling examples

The scales of justice are a universally recognized symbol of modern law and project the idea of fair distribution of law, with no influence of bias, privilege or corruption.

But there is no widely recognized counterpart for acts of injustice. Still, as Joel Cohen explores in his new book, "Broken Scales: Reflections on Injustice," injustices do happen and often are perpetrated by prosecutors, judges and manipulators of the system, with adverse consequences on the lives of celebrities as well as everyday people.

Cohen's book, which was recently reviewed in The New York Times, provides insightful narrative, case histories and interviews with 10 people who suffered from or participated in legal system injustices. At its core, the book raises the paramount question of what is an injustice. Beyond that, Cohen tackles related questions of whether there is an injustice when the game is played fairly but the system got it wrong; when an otherwise fair jury trial convicts the wrong man; and when over-the-top passions of advocates cloud the clear-thinking of others.

Cohen, a respected white-collar criminal defense lawyer and a former prosecutor in New York, has practiced for nearly 30 years, including handling complex civil litigation, at Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP. He writes regularly for the New York Law Journal, The Hill, The Huffington Post and Law.com, on criminal law, legal ethics and social policy. Contributor Dale J. Degenshein has practiced law since 1984 and has worked at Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP since 2007.

"Joel Cohen has done a masterful job of synthesizing some of the reasons why the scales of justice are broken," the New York Law Journal said in a review. "We may never see the day when public opinion, political ambition or dishonest populism will take its thumb off the scales of justice; but Joel Cohen's 'Broken Scales' bring us a long way toward that goal."

Title: "Broken Scales: Reflections on Injustice"
Price: $29.95

Missouri governor calls special session on abortion

By Summer Ballentine
Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) -- Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens said June 7 he is calling lawmakers back to the Capitol to work on abortion policies, including looking at a St. Louis ordinance that bans discrimination based on abortions and pregnancies.

The Republican governor said he also wants lawmakers to consider new abortion regulations, including annual inspections of clinics, after several anti-abortion measures failed to pass the GOP-controlled Legislature during the regular session that ended last month.

While largely symbolic, the St. Louis ordinance bars employers from firing, refusing to hire or disciplining women because they have an abortion, take contraception, use artificial insemination or become pregnant while not married. It also bans such discrimination in housing.

The ordinance was approved in the heavily Democratic city in an effort to pre-empt anti-abortion measures proposed during the regular legislative session. Greitens said in a statement Wednesday that the ordinance, which took effect in February, makes St. Louis "an abortion sanctuary city."

The ordinance prohibits discrimination based on "reproductive health decisions." It doesn't apply to religious organizations such as churches and schools, but there is no exemption for faith-based "crisis pregnancy centers" that counsel women against abortion.

A group of St. Louis Catholics has sued the city, arguing the ordinance could force employers or landlords to act against their religious beliefs.

After the ordinance was approved, Republican Rep. Tila Hubrecht introduced legislation she said would prohibit local governments and organizations from passing rules restricting the rights of crisis-pregnancy centers. The bill -- which would have effectively nullified St. Louis' ordinance -- passed the House in late March, but senators failed to send it to Greitens' desk before the regular legislative session ended on May 12.

This is the second time in less than a month that Greitens has called lawmakers back for a special session, which can cost as much as $28,000 a week in the Senate and between $50,000 and $100,000 in the House, depending on how many lawmakers attend.

The last special session dealt with proposals allowing metal manufacturers to negotiate lower rates for utilities with large utilities companies, such as Ameren. The bill passed.

That special session cost taxpayers more than $66,000, and some legislators had said the governor should only call them back again for urgent matters.