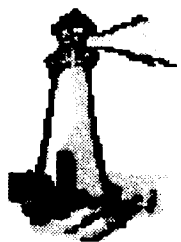


# OPINION

## The Behrend Beacon

published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College



**THE BEHREND Beacon**  
"Professionalism with a personality"

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# As I lay dying... for freedom

With earthquakes shaking up the West Coast, hurricanes battering southern states and George W. Bush leading in the polls, it looks like the end of the world is imminent.

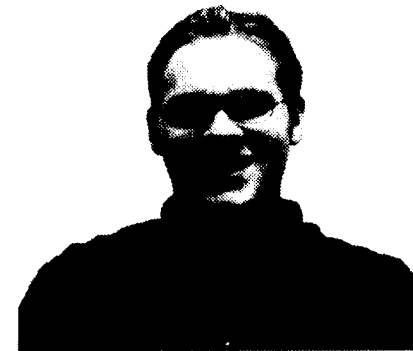
There is good news, though. Yesterday, U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero saved American consumers from a Patriot Act provision that forced Internet and telephone companies to turn over customer records at the FBI's request.

Marrero, in his decision, saw the law as a violation of the First and Fourth Amendments, effectively ensuring the privacy and free speech rights of "John Doe" and the millions of other John and Jane Does in this country today.

Bush supporters shouldn't feel bad though; even FDR had unconstitutional legislation overturned. Unfortunately, FDR's legislation wasn't as dangerous to the American democracy as the still active Patriot Act.

I won't lie. "Ordinary, law abiding" Americans aren't being directly affected yet. It's a North Carolina crystal meth dealer who is facing a life sentence on a chemical weapons charge. There's also a California pipe bomb maker facing prosecution for making a weapon of mass destruction. Most people have no sympathy for anyone like that.

The 9/11 attacks are being used not only for a fraudulent war in the Middle East, but also for the permanent detention of non-terrorists which poses a danger to all our liberties. It's a violation, if only because another person's life is on our conscience.



**Daniel J. Stasiewski**

That type of unlawful detention is no different from saying that we should sterilize the mentally disabled and the poor. Rep. Phil English, a Bush-backer, had no problem harping on his Democratic opponent's out-of-context remark about sterilization. If someone can be outraged at the inhumanity of sterilization, false imprisonment should be no different.

That is the logic we are dealing with as a nation right now. The war president has scared everyone, even those in towns the size of Erie, into thinking that there is a dirty bomb in every garbage can and the only apparent solution is eliminating the riffraff.

Luckily, there are judges out there standing up for every American's freedoms. Marrero is lining up behind the Supreme Court, which had previously overturned the Bush administration's no-lawyer policy for Guantanamo Bay prisoners. Such defense of liberty, ours and everyone's, is refreshing.

Still, it's difficult to justify the questioning of a law named the Patriot Act. It was designed that way. It makes it easier to throw out the words like "un-American." But as an ordinary, law-abiding American, I'll gamble with the idea of a terrorist making a long distance phone call and causing an explosion that would take me out. I have that thought hanging over my head everyday as a young man of draft age.

Better people have died for the freedoms that our make this country great. Here at home we have judges, the warriors on the benches, out there taking on the unconstitutional legislation when they see it.

## The He-Man Poker Players Club

By Ray Immekus  
editorial columnist

The biggest sports fad since professional bowling, hits its peak on Tuesday night with ESPN's latest poker event, the Tournament of Champions. One week after the dominus of sports broadcasting aired Greg "The Fossilman" Raymer's World Series of Poker victory, ESPN fed its gambling addicted masses with a gathering of poker's finest communicants in a winner take all, two million dollar Texas Hold'em Competition. The outcome of this event is sure to only increase poker's new found popularity, since the only woman in the competition, Annie Duke, defeated seven of the top men in what most consider, a man's game.

Duke's victory is the denouement every high ranking ESPN programming official and poker savant was hoping for, since it is sure to expand the popularity of the game to the feminine population, and the advertising revenue of ESPN.

I sincerely doubt this occurrence will cause a sudden shift in social planning amongst sorority sisters or teenyboppers across the country, but it certainly could show women that this is not just a man's game. Or is it?

I consider myself sports' traditionalist. The day middle aged women sit down to drink white zinfandel, discuss soap operas, and play poker is the day I will move to Canada. Poker is one of a

few remaining weekend escapes for men where the interruption and attempted participation of wives and girlfriends was never thought to occur. A cigar, case of beer, a wad of cash, and a deck of cards has been the Eden for a man and his cronies for an immeasurable amount of time.

Now it is not the opinion of this writer to abolish women from the future annals of poker, for there are women, such as Duke, who have proven they can beat us at our game.

Look at it this way, if wives across the country begin to gather together to gamble on Saturday nights, who will be there to put us men in our place when we gamble away a car payment, or this year's vacation money.

In one house, a man loses a small fortune, and on the same night in a house across town, his wife watches their mortgage payment wash away amidst a few bottles of wine and a discussion on the deity of Martha Stewart. Divorce rates would sky rocket, more and more children will find themselves in broken homes, and the whole human race would be wiped out within a few generations.

Now I know I have just slightly exaggerated the dangers of unisex gambling, but girls, consider this, if you begin to play poker, you are taking the little power over your men that you have from yourself.

# Letters to the editor

## Comstock fails econ

Dear Editor,

I am writing in regard to the piece by editorial columnist Kristen Comstock (Your Alarm Is Going Off) from the 9/24/04 Beacon. It sounds like Kristen is a devoted democrat, and I applaud her for taking a stand that she believes to be right. However, I think if you look at a few facts, many of her arguments simply do not hold water.

Her first concern was the deficit. Kristen seems alarmed at the level of deficits the US is running. During a time when the country is fighting a war, increasing spending on domestic programs, and recovering from a recession, is it unreasonable to expect that we would run a higher deficit? Our country has had deficits during years when we were not at war nor in a recession. Deficits increase and decrease depending on economic cycles and are not a major concern. If you look at the deficit as a percentage of GDP, a truer measure of its size, it is even less of a worry. In fact, the gross federal debt as a percent of GDP is lower now than it was in 1992, as well as at any time during the Clinton presidency.

Kristen also makes it sound as if Bush has done nothing for the Pell Grant program. In fact, after taking office, the president increased Pell funding from \$3,300 per student to \$4,050, an INCREASE of 23%. He has also enabled students taking AP classes in high school to earn an extra \$1,000. She is right that he has not increased funding over the last few years, but there is no question that the funding

has increased during his term.

Kristen mentions job losses but conveniently fails to mention that the economic contraction started while Bill Clinton was still in office, and was worsened by the events of Sept. 11th. Bush's fault? I don't think so. His tax cuts are working and new jobs are being added every day. GE Transportation Systems here in Erie recently announced that it is adding 250 new high-paying jobs, which company representatives attribute to an improving economy. Jobs are currently being added in almost every sector of the US economy.

The anti-war argument is the one that I find the most incredulous. There are people in this world who hate Americans and our way of life. This is nothing new and not something we can blame on Bush. Remember these same people exploded a bomb in the World Trade Center when Clinton was still president. Our choice is to sit back and let them bring the battle to our citizens on our streets, or take the battle to them. Democrats would have us believe that Saddam was not the problem, and that he had no ties to terrorists. In fact, one of the 9/11 hijackers met with a top Iraqi official in Baghdad just a month before the tragedy (a fact you would not have heard if you get your news from Jennings, Brokaw, or Rather). Known terrorists have been found in Iraq, including those with ties to Al Qaeda. And we know Saddam used WMDs on his own people. Is your alarm going off yet? Regarding No Child Left Behind,

it's a joke to think that education funding has decreased. The US is currently at war, yet we are spending more money on education than we are on our military. We are also spending more money on education than we have at any time in the history of this country (almost \$10,000 per student per year.). That funding per student is higher than the spending of every developed country except Switzerland (per the US Department of Education web site).

Finally, I would like to know how Ms. Comstock's civil liberties are being threatened by the Patriot Act. This act is in place to better track and detect those who wish to kill Americans. I have not seen my freedoms (or those of anyone I know) change one bit because of it. The fact that Kristen can write a letter blasting the leadership of her country leads me to believe that this is still a free country and that her liberties have also not been affected.

In a free country, everyone is entitled to their opinion and the right to express it. We will be deluged with information between now and November. When looking at that information, be it from democrats or republicans, it would be wise to do so with a wary eye. It is time for all of us to focus more on facts and less on the hysterical rantings of those in either party.

Ed Miseta  
economics lecturer

# Positive letter of the week

## Praise for comstock

Dear Editor,

I would like to pass along my thanks and praise to Kristen. Your article was, very simply, TO THE POINT. Bush is throwing this country down the toilet and no one seems to care; it's going to be a sad state of affairs if Bush is re-elected.

Again, I want to say thank you, I'm glad to FINALLY see that I'm not the only one on this campus who cares and has their eyes open to what has been

happening.

So one last time, thank you for putting down just a small sampling of the hundreds of things that is wrong with the Bush presidency. As you have noticed by now, I can't say "thank you" enough. Let's hope more students have read your article.

Sincerely,  
James Farver

# Reaching for the snooze button

Dear Editor,

While the presidential election continues to get closer, and President Bush's poll numbers get better it is no surprise that Ms. Comstock would write an editorial like this. What is surprising is the lack of a counterpoint in this week's editorial page, and the slacking analysis by the writer, Ms. Comstock, on the President's record.

Her editorial was nothing more than a continued babbling of democratic talking points that liberals have absorbed into their heads by listening to Michael Moore, reading the New York Times editorial page or watching the CBS Evening News.

Yes, my alarm is going off and it began on the morning of Sept. 11. It is easy to analyze the Bush administration if you forget that on that morning the financial institutions of this country were destroyed, 3,000 people died, and the radical fringe of Islam declared war on the United States.

After this the Bush administration had to fight the war on terror, heal a broken economy, and stifle a recession that began in the second term of President Bill Clinton. All of these, especially the war on terror, cost money, Ms. Comstock, and in all of our wars in history we have gone into debt. Tax cuts were needed to stop the advance of the 2001-2003 recession, a decision that has enabled the economy to grow tremendously in the last 10 months.

OK, now you want to discuss why George W. Bush has not "created" any jobs for the poor college graduates. This is an easy one; no president can create jobs for the American people, no matter what John Kerry says.

I will however cede the environmental point to Ms. Comstock, because I do not believe the president has addressed the question of renewable energy sources to reduce dependency on fossil fuels in the future.

The Bush Administration spends more money on education than the Clinton

Administration, and more money will not solve our education problems, this can only be done with more discipline in public schools.

The Patriot Act has not infringed on the civil liberties of myself, my family, and probably not even you, Ms. Comstock. The only people who should be afraid of the Patriot Act are the terrorists, and this is a good thing. Your editorial could have analyzed several legitimate failures of the Bush Administration including the Mexican border chaos, the post-war control of Iraq, and the President's inability to hold his staff accountable for bad information.

Unfortunately you allowed your blind ideology to dominate your editorial and your lack of knowledge/analysis showed in your editorial. So I'm glad that I will be waking up to a President who understands the prominent issue of our day, the war on Islamic fundamentalism, in the next four years.

A.J. Zuber

Want to go a round?  
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beaconletters@aol.com