

# OPINION

## The Behrend Beacon

Published Weekly by the students of Penn State Erie



THE BEHREND  
Beacon

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## Letter to the editor

### Presidential candidate speaks out on tuition

Few Penn State students would deny that they are receiving a great education. To deny that we are receiving a great education would make no sense. Why would anyone pay thousands of dollars for nothing?

However, our legislators in Harrisburg do not seem to agree that Penn State is such a good investment. Our legislators apparently seem to think that a Penn State degree is a waste of money. After all, it is our legislators that have cut funding to the University every year for the last 10 years. The direct result of these budget cuts is an increase in tuition.

Consequently, one is led to believe, that our legislators think a Penn State education is worth less and less every year, while they are asking us, the students, to pay more and more every year.

Why should we, the students, pay more for something that apparently is depreciating in value? The problem

with our legislators' logic is that a Penn State education is not depreciating in value.

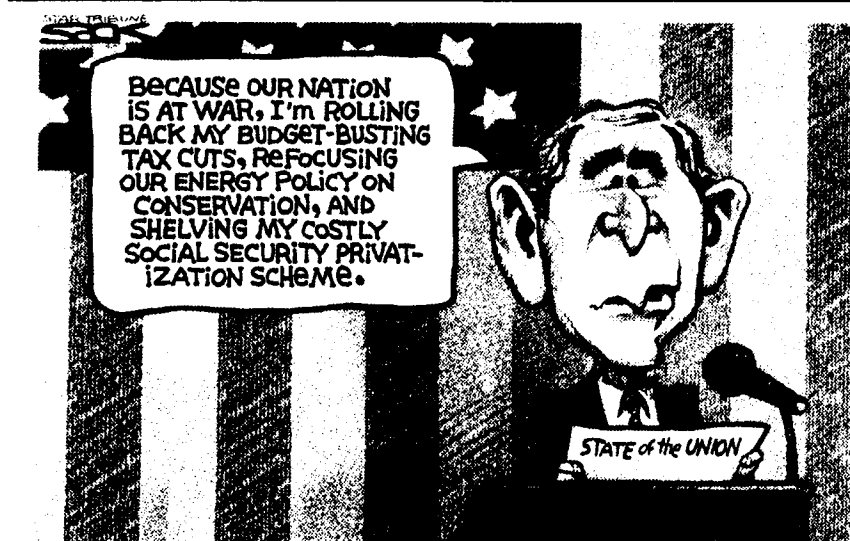
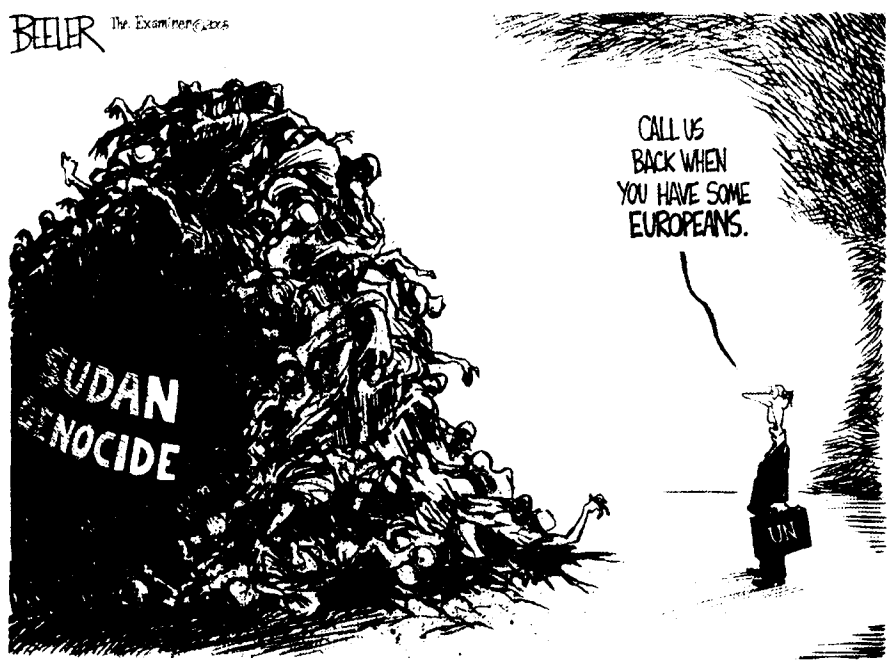
According to the Penn State Grassroots Network, every dollar the State contributes to Penn State's annual budget returns more than \$19 in direct economic benefits to Pennsylvania.

Therefore, one is left with the question of what to do. How do we convince our legislators that Penn State is not a waste of money? My suggestion: let your voice be heard, and go to the Rally at the Rotunda on March 15. While individually our representatives might be able to ignore us, collectively we will not be silenced.

Sincerely,

Alexander Henderson  
 Chair Pro-tempore,  
 Student Government Association

BEELEER The Examining One



President Bush opens with a joke....

**I caught you a delicious bass.**  
**Send letters to: beaconletters@aol.com**

## Bush delivers state of confusion

Wednesday night was George W. Bush's State of the Union Address. During the course of the hour long speech (interrupted about 61 times by bouts of applause from republicans, sometimes democrats and sometimes both), he outlined future plans for reform in social security, community health centers, defense in capital punishment cases and a variety of other equally tantalizing topics. The majority of American college student's thoughts on the address;

1. "Is 'Law and Order' going to be on afterwards?"

2. "Those poor old rich people—they have to keep standing and sitting."

3. "Why are their fingers purple?"

The State of the Union Address repeatedly proves to be a huge hug fest, an orgy of senators and congressman who wouldn't normally show up to listen to W. but recognize the need to make a cameo on national television so voters can see their representatives interacting with the president.

The president opened with his successes from the past four years. He spouted off a slew of numbers and generalizations that most listeners would never be able to distinguish between fact and fiction—"2.3 million new jobs," "cut the deficit in half by 2009," "eliminates more than 150 government programs that are not getting results," "200,000 workers to get training for a better career." It all sounds so positive—doesn't it?

Bush never shares any essential



Brad Stewart  
 news editor

information with the nation, nothing worth watching for an hour, except for his social security plan, but even this plan was missing key components like—how are we going to pay for the switch from one plan to another?

No plan is perfect, but shouldn't the president mention that the plan would cost the government trillions of dollars and would take more than 20 years before it was self-sustainable? Instead, Bush played the "children's future" card and said, "But we have to move ahead with courage and honesty, because our children's retirement security is more important than partisan politics."

He's portraying any politician who opposes his plan as a cowardly, dishonest, child hating terrorist.

Also, it always gets me when the

president claims that terrorists hate democracy. That's just plain false. Terrorists hate the United States. Not democracy. Most of the time terrorists commit their acts of violence because they have very few rights and are lacking any political representation. Violence, though not justified, in their mind is the only feasible course of action. Terrorists love democracy. They have wet dreams about democracy. They wish they had democracy.

He also took the time to mention his support for a constitutional amendment to block marriage between same sex partners. He probably forgot about that other part of the constitution that claims separation from church and state—oops. Cheney probably wasn't clapping during this part of the speech.

The most impressive moments in the address were the recognition of Sofia Taleb al-Suhail, an Iraqi woman who voted in the Jan. 30 election and lost a father to Hussein's intelligence service and the honoring of Sgt. Byron Norwood, a Marine killed in action.

These were moments of tangible clarity imbedded within a potpourri of confusing rapid-fire Bush statements. And while the honoring of these individuals might have been a selfless exploitation of two amazing people, it reminded the audience and viewer, if just for a moment, underneath all the political banter, that we're all Americans.

## Devil with a blue smock on

By Chris Hvizdak  
 editorial columnist

If you value America, do not shop at Wal-Mart We are promised that Wal-Mart's prices will "always" be low, which they may be. However that perceived savings is deducted not from your debit card, but rather from the whole of human civilization. The U. S. of A. is rocketing toward being primarily composed of a new retail slave class and Wal-Mart leading the transformation.

First and foremost, Wal-Mart exploits Chinese people and women. It's difficult to surmise exactly to what extent Chinese nationals are abused as Wal-Mart refuses to inform human rights organizations of the locations of their overseas factories. In 1999 Wal-Mart was accomplice to the well-known "Kathie Lee Handbag Scandal" where it was found that employees earned 10 cents an hour where the minimum wage was 36 cents. In 1987 only 3 percent of all store managers were female. Women working at Wal-Mart have recently won pay increases although male managers still grossly outnumber female managers.

Wal-Mart's bag of tricks contains a veritable cornucopia of evil. The big show starts with the purchasing of goods from Chinese sweatshops and disgracing workers with "sub-living-wage" wages and abysmal health.

Not only is there zero tolerance of unionization, Wal-Mart strong-arms municipal tax breaks. These tactics fuel this modern abomination of capitalism to spread like a cancer across the retail landscape of America and the world. On this foundation of bad faith, Wal-Mart is executing its intent to eliminate as many competing department, grocery, wholesale and specialty stores as it can take down. And they succeed.

All this is just peachy for Wal-Mart shareholders and executives, however those people are in the minority. Hardworking, honest Americans – the majority – are raped

by this parasite in both their income and quality of life. Wal-Mart's low-low employee wages, along with those of McDonald's and other such oppressors, maintain an artificially low minimum wage that cannot adequately support a working family. On average, Wal-Mart employees make \$8.23 an hour and work only 32 hours a week. Do the math and try to support yourself. I dare 'ya.

Wal-Mart blesses less than half of its employees with health insurance; and forks over whopping \$3,500 per year while the national average stands at \$5,600. For most Wal-Mart employees the waiting period for insurance eligibility is 2 full years. The national average in most American companies for eligibility is a scant 1.3 months. Ouch – figuratively and literally.

Thinking about knocking on someone else's door? Good luck. Working class journalist Lenny Crist cites studies that indicate for every 100 jobs Wal-Mart creates, it destroys 150. This is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of impact upon communities. Wal-Mart forces towns that it penetrates to provide it gross tax breaks that pay off big in the form of huge municipal debt when Wal-Mart leaves town after said breaks expire.

Wal-Mart's crimes are many and far beyond the scope of any brief examination. When such a monster rises it must be cut down by swift and brutal anti-trust legislation. Sadly, such actions are unlikely in the age of Enron where all reform is reactionary and none preventative. Add in the fact that Wal-Mart owns most elected representatives and the prospect of the government taking care of us is slim.

The savings of the present are the ruin of the future. Low prices today equal enslavement tomorrow. Go to K-Mart, Target – go anywhere else. Organize. Kill the beast. Start at [www.anti-walmart.com](http://www.anti-walmart.com). You may pay more – in fact, you will. But remember – a dollar more today buys tomorrow.

## It's time to pass the papal crown

Any other organization would force a sick 84-year-old CEO to retire, but not the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, Pope John Paul II is stuck in such a position that he probably should not be filling due to his poor health.

The pope suffers from Parkinson's disease, an illness affecting neurons in the brain whose awareness was raised in the United States after Michael J. Fox was diagnosed.

Common symptoms of Parkinson's include shaking, stiffness and problems with balance. Some people who live with this disease also suffer from depression. According to [www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org), Parkinson's is the most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's.

The leader of one of the largest religions in the world would probably not be able to perform his duties to even his own standards when faced with all of these obstacles.

So why is this man kept on his papal throne when he is in such a perilous physical condition? Why can't he retire to a nice little villa and live out the rest of his days in peace?

Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican's secretary of state, told the Associated Press that the pope was "recovering well" after having the flu for about a week. The Associated Press



Lacy Buzard  
 copy editor

also reported that the pope has been in failing health for the past few years.

Think of your grandfather still having to work even though he hasn't been 100 percent for the past few years. Would anyone in the United States, or anywhere in the world for that matter, stand for such treatment of the elderly? There would be a lawsuit faster than Lance Armstrong could ride from Kochel to Reed.

Granted the pope has official aids and all sorts of other people to assist him, but why should he have to do anything at all? He's the head of the Catholic Church, not the king of England; there is no reason why he

should have to rule until he takes his last breath.

His work schedule isn't too hectic. The Associated Press says that Pope John Paul II's normal work week includes working on documents, meeting with world leaders and making public appearances a couple times each week.

What would happen, though, if he was in such a meeting and the heat was turned up in the conversation? The 84 year-old may not be able to take the excitement. Attilio Maseri, an Italian cardiologist, may say that the pope has "exceptional cardiovascular function," but any heart at that age is at risk when too much adrenaline starts pumping.

Maybe it's time for the Catholic Church to move on. After all, a new pope will have to be found eventually. There were popes before John Paul and there will be popes after. Why not start the search now and give Pope John Paul II the rest and relaxation he deserves after 27 years of guiding the religion?

When it comes right down to it, the pope is just a man. He would probably say so himself. At this stage in his life, he should be treated as such and not given more responsibility than he can safely handle.