

OPINION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

The Behrend Beacon

Published Weekly by the students of Penn State Erie



THE BEHREND
Beacon

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Traicie Kendziora

Cartoonist
Zack Mentz

Photography Editor
Michelle Vera Surovica

Penn State Erie,
The Behrend College
First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed
Union Building
Station Road, Erie, PA 16563

Contact the Beacon at:
Telephone: (814) 898-6488
Fax: (814) 898-6019

Quote of the Week

"College football is a sport that bears the same relation to education that bullfighting does to agriculture."

~Elbert Hubbard

Submission Guidelines

The Beacon welcomes readers to share their views on this page.

Letters and commentary pieces can be submitted by email to opinion@psu.edu or directly to the Beacon office, located in the Reed Building.

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run the

submission.

All submissions must include the writer's year in school, major and name as The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters.

Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue. All submissions are considered, but because of space limitations, some may not be published.

All submissions must include consent to be edited before they can be edited for publication.

Letters to the Editor

Annie Gianoglio needs to make a few corrections to her rather biased editorial about abortion published on the 30th of September. She writes about the travesty of "millions of children being murdered," as if to conjure images of kindergarteners being systematically exterminated, not several-week-old fetuses being removed in a surgical procedure.

She then goes on some tangent about HIV which, even after reading the paragraph several times, I still cannot connect to the rest of the article. Annie then claims that a woman going to the hospital after rape will immediately have upon her performed a "DNC," (its actually D&C) which apparently prevents conception from ever occurring, and is thus morally

Dear Beacon,

Last week, a columnist of yours, one Jasmine Lee, whored the Beacon out for a strange, and inaccurate, protestation of the American legal process. She claimed that the removal of the words, "under god," from the American pledge of allegiance is a violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution, as it censored the rights of the authors of that pledge. She also claimed that students have the right to not recite this pledge in school, which, supposedly, allows them the freedom of choosing their own beliefs. As well, she threw in some weird legal critique of the civil system.

People, the American pledge of allegiance never contained the words, "under god," until Congress decided America needed to distance itself culturally from the Communist party in 1952. They censored the original text of that pledge. So, if someone wants to allow writers the creative freedom to express themselves, and chooses the pledge as the means to express censorship, the addition should be removed. Adding words to a bit of writing is as much censorship as is taking away. What the hell was she thinking, saying removing, "under god," is censorship? She's the censor. She wants to force upon the original text of our pledge a belief in some sort of deity.

Aside from Ms. Lee trying to censor the pledge, she claims that students have the right to not recite the pledge. So is she trying to say that unless one chooses to ascribe belief to a deity, one should not be allowed to declare allegiance to the United States? Is she trying to say that agnostics and atheists, and some aspect of Buddhists, and those weird Californians who've formed an actual religion of Jedi, and Unitarians, cannot swear their devotion to the concepts of the Constitution?

acceptable to do.

Conception occurs at the time of the sexual act, not at some random later point, so the D&C is still, in effect, ending the existence of a fetus in its earliest stage. WebMD even defines this procedure as a "...surgical abortion done in the first 12 weeks (first trimester) of a pregnancy." I know the abortion debate is still very controversial and is based on a lot of opinions, but when facts are introduced, I simply ask that they be correct. Also, what do "the terrorists" mentioned in the last sentence have to do with abortion?

Paul Zielinski

Junior, Management Information Systems

That is an elitist expression, which does not adhere to the expression of freedom, which she touted throughout the editorial.

She also came up with some ridiculous idea of double jeopardy in the civil courts. Her support for this was the fact that Michael Newdow, the individual bringing the lawsuit to the courts, had had his case dismissed by the Supreme Court last year, due to the fact that he did not have legal custody of his daughter while she was in school, and so did not have the right to sue on her behalf. This was a technical response, which was corrected, and so Newdow would, even in a criminal court, have the right to bring this case back to the courts.

As well, she mentioned the country being founded on Christian beliefs. Even if this were accurate, we are not living in the world of the founding fathers anymore. We have determined, legally, that a separation exists between Church and State. Quite frankly, that does not give public fields, like schools, the right to make people, like students, subvert their patriotism by refusing them the right to say the pledge.

I agree that this is not, by itself, a terribly significant issue. It's kind of a "politically correct," issue, which does take up valuable court time. But a line must be drawn somewhere, or religious influence may inveigle itself into every aspect of society, as Pastor Ted Haggard of the New Life Megachurch of Colorado wants. And apparently Jasmine Lee, as well, according to her editorial. Do we really want the United States to turn into a Taliban-ruled State? Apparently, by this half-cocked editorial, some people do.

- Ben Haire
Political Science Major

STAFF EDITORIAL

Please step anywhere but on our First Amendment

At the top of this very page we print the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. We print it every week because we want students to know that they are free to express their opinions in our paper (as long as the opinions are not libelous or threatening). Free speech and freedom of the press are protected by the First Amendment, and this protection applies to all sections of our paper.

As journalists, we often are scrutinized by the choices we make when printing the news. However, freedom of the press means that any press publication has the right (protected by the Constitution) to print anything other than libelous material (under an active judicial review), under the scrutiny of the staff only, no one else.

Metaphorically speaking, a picture is worth a thousand words, and pictures (being part of a free press) often are the center of controversy. Thus was the case this past week for The Behrend Beacon. On the front page of last week's issue, we published a photo of a Behrend student at the Alpha Sigma Alpha (ASA) Date Auction. The photo showed said student in shiny red shorts dancing in a precarious position.

This picture told the story of part of an event that happened on campus. Pictures tell stories, they relay news to the readers. It is up to journalists to make sure that news is told accurately and completely. That is part of adhering to journalistic integrity. Leaving out pictures because they would be deemed too obscene or grotesque by a select few would not be cohesive with our ethical guidelines.

There are obviously certain pictures that would not be acceptable to place in a college newspaper and we recognize that fact. However, there are certain photos (such as the one we placed last week) that are acceptable to publish in college newspaper; but would not be totally appropriate in other publications. The majority of our audience is comprised of our peers, and we are well aware of how they will react to certain things. Our audience reacted exactly

as we expected them to last week, criticism included.

We understand that some of our audience members were not pleased with our choice of photo. However, we placed that picture in a student-run publication. Our entire editorial staff had a say in whether or not that picture was to be placed. We published the photo because we knew that it was part of the Date Auction story - it happened at the event. It vividly told a story of events that happened at the Date Auction. Also, it was not the only picture attributed to the article written about the charity event.

As to the question of whether or not it was an error in judgment to publish that picture, we hold to the truth that it is our right (protected by the First Amendment) to speak freely as part of the press. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America will not stand for censorship by anyone, and neither will the free press.

There seems to be a problem with distinction lines. Issues arise when students become journalists. People question whether or not to treat us as students or as journalists. The law treats us as journalists and we are held accountable as such. We ask for the same treatment and respect from our peers and our superiors.

As journalists, we provide a media that relays a medium (message) to an audience. As journalists, we provide the facts of actual events that have happened at some time and place in either textual or pictorial form. We do not cater to anyone's personal agenda - that is not our job nor our responsibility.

Journalists cannot cower when citizens flex their proverbial muscle in order to intimidate and quiet them (i.e. take away their inalienable First Amendment right). For centuries, citizens in positions of power have tried to shake their mighty fist at the free press. However, the press has and will always prevail because that mighty fist is as ineffective as our mothers shaking their finger at us when we walk out the door on a Friday night. It is under no circumstances acceptable for citizens with authority to be under the delusion that they can stifle news.

Reflections from a Jaded "Super" Senior

By Michelle Vera Surovica
photography editor/mis1210@psu.edu

What's the easiest way to get to Bruno's if you live in Ohio Hall? There isn't one. What's the best way to get there from Senat Hall? Just go outside. These freshmen today have it too easy. Back when I was a freshman, we had traditional dormitories far, far away from the hustle and bustle of inner campus. The distance perpetually grew each time a stomach growled. Did we give into the temptation of casually skipping to the nearest eatery? Of course not! It was cold outside, and that's how we liked it - hungry and cold. We didn't have any of those fancy-schmancy suites with private bathrooms and at a convenient location designed to put like-minded students together.

No, we were chaotically thrown together against our will and there was only four showers for a whole hallway of girls. Not just ordinary girls, but skinny freshmen girls who wanted to hook a college stud before the weight gain started. The energy used by the sophisticated models of hairdryers and curlers would have been

strong enough to power a small country. And that was okay, because it built character. Nothing affirms a person's inner strength like battling for an electrical socket that hasn't been burned out or a coveted spot in one of the remaining clean showers. There were four, but the good things in life rarely last. The other two got covered in puke once the guys on the other floor discovered that the former residents forgot their secret liquor stash in the rafters.

We also didn't have as many pathways. There is now a new convenient infrastructure of pavement that guides the poor directed freshmen to the Science building. Back in the day, we didn't have pathways of cement. We had pathways of ice and mush. We didn't walk. We fell. Hard. And we liked it. Nothing makes a person appreciate a pair of warm, dry pants as the chill soaks through your soiled jeans and nearly numb bottom.

Don't get me wrong. I don't hate the new breed of pampered freshmen at all. Actually, I happen to like them very much. Especially for breakfast.

Beacon Thumbs Up



- Llamas on campus.
- Sherbet on sale at Brunos.
- Charging Health and Wellness prescriptions to your Penn State Bursar account.

Beacon Thumbs Down



- Painfully slow PSU Webmail.
- 'Family Guy' reruns so early in the season.
- Inconsiderate cell phone talkers in the library computer lab.