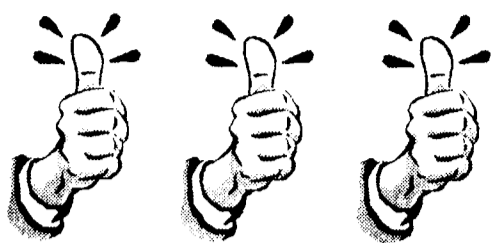


# OPINION

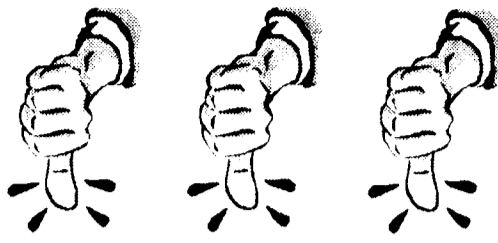
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the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

## Beacon Thumbs Up



- It's officially spring
- Penn State Behrend janitorial staff!
- Finding money in your pockets
- "Big Buckin' Chicken"
- Shamrock Shakes
- Dollar menu at Burger King

## Beacon Thumbs Down



- Snow in springtime
- Suitemates hoarding garbage bags
- Automatic paper towel dispensers
- Unibrows!
- People with bad breath who want to tell you a secret
- Unorganized organizations

# Abortion before the Supreme Court

By John Bigus  
contributing writer  
jtb244@psu.edu

Reproductive rights are sacred. The idea that conscious and responsible citizens of the United States would fight to give up such a right is reprehensible. Choices will always be available, and no one will be forced to abort a desired pregnancy. Control of the self does not appear to be the issue in light of the more pressing concern of self-control: some believe the government must legislate morality to a suffocating degree.

The most consistent and logical anti-abortion position is the distinction between personal responsibility in taking emergency measures and the irresponsible use of abortion as birth control. This is most tangible in application to partial-birth abortion, which is a third trimester operation where childbirth is instigated before the skull of the fetus is pierced or crushed. An awareness of one's health and timely efforts to make life-altering decisions ought to make these operations rare, necessary only in response to a loss of resources or a life-altering change (abandonment or illness, for example).

Partial-birth abortions in the third trimester will likely be eliminated when *Gonzales v. Carhart* comes in front of the Supreme Court. It was accepted onto the docket in late February. This case deals with federal law instead of state law as in *Sternberg v. Carhart*, which was recently decided in favor of maintaining the status quo. With Justices Samuel Alito and John Roberts on the bench and the moderate vote thrown out the window with O'Connor, a right-wing conservative decision against the right of abortion appears likely.

The issue is not clearly viewed through the lens of barbarism versus moralism, although appeals to emotion might be successful in this vein. The true nature of the dilemma is multifaceted. The most honest pro-abortion position is the distinction allowed between human beings and the parasitic clump of cells without brain activity which grows in the womb. The most wretched pro-abortion position concerns the inalienable right of self-determination: if a woman desires an abortion, she will have one. This was one of the prompts for *Roe v. Wade*, the sheer number of deaths due to amateur abortions.

The raging debate is a distraction from the issues of corruption, cronyism, extreme and detrimental fiscal liberalism, liberal expansion of the government's power, and irresponsibility to the oaths sworn by our representatives. Never-ending religious debate flavors these arguments because in defense of one's religious views, one will not stop fighting. It is the immoral application of marketing tactics to ensorcell poor souls who will revel in buzz words. It is absurd to believe there is such thing as moral murder.

Moral murder is oxymoronic and antithetical to rationality; it is a nonsense term. Rationally, citizens' morals guide their actions. Ignore distractions and hand-waving. Remember that the rights of citizens supercede everything, and legislating morality is an insult to the capacity of the American citizen. Life is defined differently person-to-person, and by law. The destruction of the right of any person to make their own decision about the nature of life would be a disgusting blow to the freedoms won for us by our forefathers.

## Quorum? We don't need no stinkin' quorum

By Jerry Pohl  
humor editor  
jhp153@psu.edu

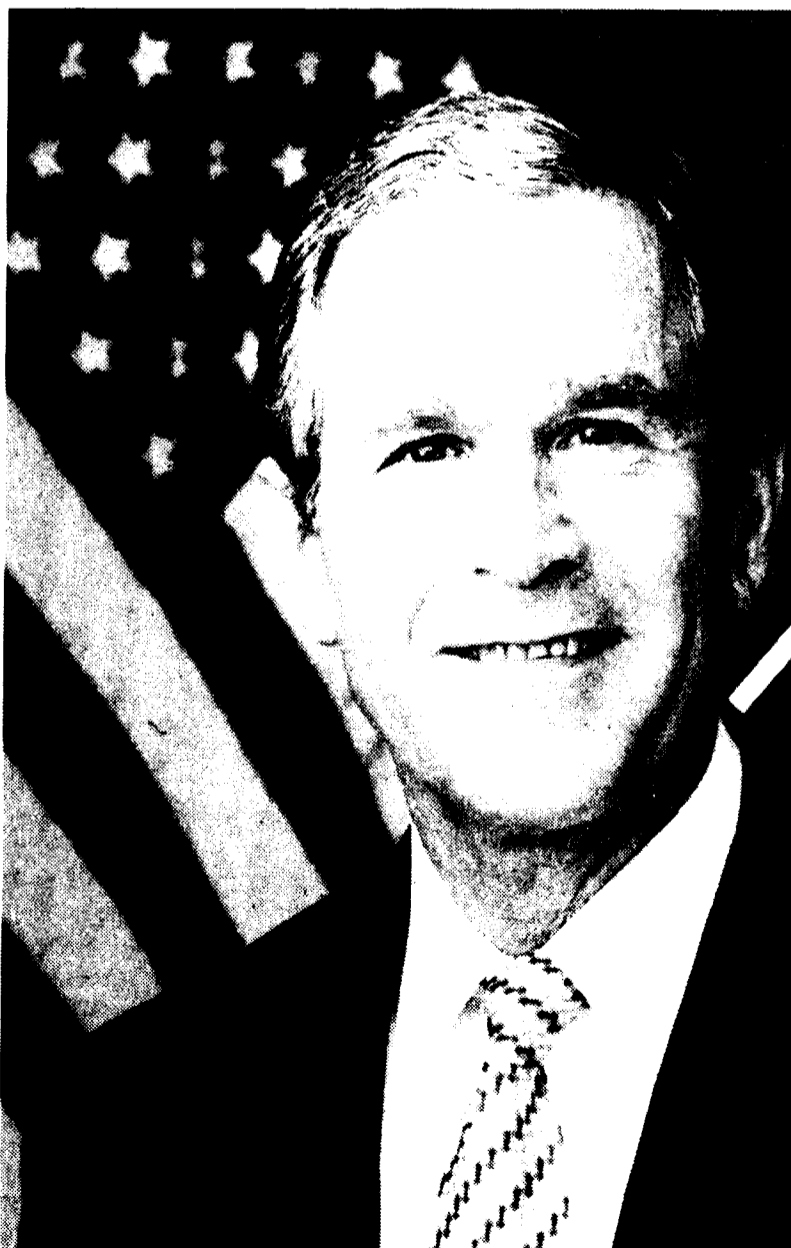
Dictionary.com defines the noun "irony" as follows:  
a. Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs.  
b. An occurrence, result, or circumstance notable for such incongruity.

At Monday's special SGA meeting, which was called in regards to the constitutional legitimacy of the Deepthi Soni/Ross Zambanini ticket, Presidential candidate Meredith Straub's running mate, Ken Middlemiss, said something that was extraordinary. At the meeting, SGA did not have the fifteen voting members necessary for quorum: meaning they did not have enough voting members present to make any decisions. SGA President Alex Henderson made everyone aware of this fact. The number of voting members needed for quorum is specified in the SGA Constitution, which is the document that serves as the official written rules governing SGA and its procedures. Middlemiss raised his hand to speak and was called upon to do so. He asked, "Is there any way we can suspend the constitution to get quorum?"

**"Irony: Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs."**

Those who were there that day should feel privileged to have been present for such a perfect example of irony. Being Humor Editor, I knew right away that this was a great moment in the history of irony and wrote it down immediately, so as to not forget the exact wording of the quote.

Allow me to help you appreciate the irony better. Ken Middlemiss wanted to "suspend the constitution to get quorum" so that a decision could be made regarding the interpretation of the constitution. Also, quorum would be needed to make the decision to suspend the constitution. My hope is that Ken middlemiss's hard work will pay off and foster a deeper appreciation of irony that is in all of us.



**Now that Congress raised the debt limit, I can make the final payments on that Iraq exit strategy I've had on layaway.**

JERRY POHL

## Submission Guidelines

The Beacon welcomes readers to share their views on this page. Letters and commentary pieces can be submitted by email to [dgm147@psu.edu](mailto:dgm147@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.

## The Behrend Beacon

Published Weekly by the students of Penn State Erie

**News Editor**  
Jennifer Haight

**Assistant Managing Editor**  
Patrick Webster

**Sports Editor**  
Chris LaFuria

**Opinion Editor**  
Daniel Mitchell

**Humor Editor**  
Jerry Pohl

**Student Life Editor**  
Sean Mihlo

**Calendar Page Editor**  
Siobhan Conway

**Copy Editors**  
Kate Keleseny  
Rachael Conway  
Justin Plansinis  
Jordan Gilmore

**Photography Editor**  
Michelle Vera Surovic

---

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

## Letter to the editor

Dear Sports editor

After reading your article in the 3-17-06 BEACON, we were driven to set your way of thinking straight. As fans of NASCAR we did not appreciate the contents of the piece on NASCAR not being a true sport, or the drivers being non-athletes.

First let us help you to a dictionary...SPORT-active pastime; recreation; specific diversion, usually involving physical exercise and having a set form and body of rules. ATHLETE-one who partakes in competitive sports; person who is trained or skilled in exercise, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina.

When you see grown, physically fit, men get out of a racecar after 3-4 hours being exhausted and sweating profusely, you can only assume the job they performed was physically exhausting. Along with the mental fatigue of concentrating on the big picture of winning the race while going 150-200 mph only inches apart from each other for hours. Plus, as a team, the decisions and strategy that must be planned to make the right calls, and abide by the rules set forth. My husband and another who went in a 3-lap ride along with a racecar driver commented, that when you see the force it takes to maneuver the steering wheel, one has to have good upper body strength, and to sit confined to such a cramped and hot space for hours, one must be conditioned as an athlete to endure this feat.

NASCAR has come a very long way from the days of bootlegging moonshine in the hills of VA. to be the sport it is today, and now there are professional race tracks that have sprung up all over this country with a following that encompasses many people from all walks of life.

So, Mr. LaFuria, you can see that we definitely do not agree with you; we think NASCAR fits the criteria of a sport, as well as its drivers fulfilling the meaning of an athlete. VROOM, VROOM.....

Karen Hein and Mary Tuzynski  
Operations/Human Resources  
Penn State Erie, The Behrend College  
814-898-6000, FAX 814-898-7777