

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 Behrend

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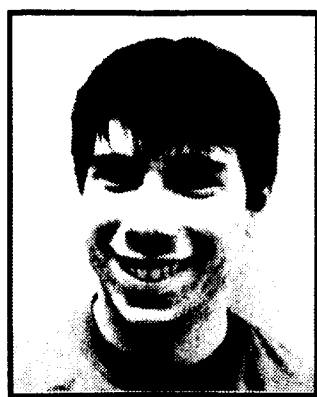


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Penn State Erie,
The Behrend College
First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed Union Building
Station Road, Erie, PA 16563
Contact the Beacon at:
Telephone: (814) 898-6488
Fax: (814) 898-6019

This week in politics



By Chris Brown
copy editor

George W. Bush just can't get anything right these days, even in the eyes of previously loyal Republicans. Take the recent agreement that the United States, Russia, China, and South Korea reached with North Korea on Feb. 14. The agreement, the first in a series that needs to be hashed out, halts North Korean production of nuclear material in its reactors in exchange for fuel and aid from the other countries involved in the negotiations. The settlement doesn't require North Korea to get rid of the weapons it currently has, though a timetable was set for negotiating their disarmament and complete access of inspectors to all North Korean officials at a later date.

Republicans criticized the administration, saying it flip-flopped on its hard-line stance towards North Korea and sacrificed all their hard work. Let's be honest, exactly how successful has the U.S. been since 2002 when Bush announced North Korea as part of the 'Axis of Evil'? In Dec. 2002 North Korea restarted a once dormant nuclear reactor to produce fuel for nuclear weapons. Then they withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and test-fired numerous missiles. All this culminated a few months ago when North Korea conducted nuclear tests to show the world they had successfully built a nuclear weapon.

This change of stance by the Bush

administration is too little, too late. When Bush came into office, relations between North Korea and the world were at historic highs; that all changed when Bush included North Korea in his 'Axis of Evil.' The exact same conditions agreed to on Feb. 13, 2007, were proposed by North Korea in Oct. 2003. But, the Bush Administration rejected it. Why the about-face all of a sudden? Only one thing has changed since Bush took office: instead of guessing if they can build nuclear weapons, we're asking how many they have and where they are.

North Korea knows what it is doing, they already have the nuclear weapons and the deterrent that comes with them; they gain nothing further from maintaining their nuclear program; therefore, it only makes sense that they would trade in their program for some assistance and lifting of sanctions. While they did agree to hold talks on disarmament, it is a lot easier to hide a few warheads than an entire nuclear program; a lesson Bush should have learned from Iraq when they found all the WMD facilities but no weapons to go with them.

Debate is currently raging in the House of Representatives over a non-binding resolution expressing their disapproval of Bush's troop surge in Iraq. This is the FIRST debate on the Iraq war since it began in 2003. While some Republicans are expected to vote in favor of it tomorrow, Feb. 16, a majority will vote against it. Those Republicans argue a vote for the resolution pays a disservice to the troops. No, the only disservice done to the troops in Iraq is that no debate has occurred since its incep-

tion and no one bothered to question our involvement or our strategies there until now.

This past week the Erie area experienced another bad snowstorm. During the snowstorm almost all schools in Erie County were forced to close because of the inclement weather; however, Behrend was not one of them. That's why I was more than a little shocked at the e-mail from Director of Student Affairs, Ken Miller, telling me that it was "business as usual," while on the news, local authorities urged everyone to stay off the streets unless it was necessary. Now, my parents told me it was absolute-

ly necessary to get a college degree if I want to succeed, but I never thought that included putting my life on the line for one. After a read of the Chancellor's messages on Behrend's homepage and the last two snowstorms, Behrend's policy seems to be, 'we won't cancel, we will let the professors cancel for us, but we're not taking responsibility.'

That's fine and dandy, but when I have 4 classes and only one professor cancels, that's nice for them, they don't have to come to school, but I still do.

Earlier this year when Behrend canceled *only evening* classes, it took a few hours of discussion with a raging storm outside and a pile-up on I-90 near Behrend's exit before a decision was made. Thank God there wasn't a student involved in the accident while the discussion took place. Why is it so hard to cancel classes? I'm not asking for a complete shut-down of campus, I understand dorm students need to eat and have other services provided, but with such a large number of commuters, when does education become more important than safety?

Let's be honest, exactly how successful has the U.S. been since 2002, when Bush announced North Korea as part of the 'Axis of Evil'?

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I happened to come across the article 'And That's a Rap,' and I must voice my concern. The writer expressed his dismay at the state of hip-hop music, voicing that the genre founded by Grand Master Flash and the Sugar Hill Gang was 'dead.' I'd like to go on the record and state that hip-hop is not dead.

As far as the music is concerned, I agree with the writer that there is a great deal of music that essentially focuses solely on the 'bling' element of hip-hop. But to consider hip-hop dead would be to pay no respect to the many artists today that are continuing in the tradition of the Sugar Hill Gang, KRS-One, and Rakim. Artists such as Lupe Fiasco, The Roots, Common, and countless others still carry the torch we love as hip-hop. Maybe these artists are not on Star 104's rotation, and chances are you won't find them on TRL, but I promise you that if you look around you, you will see their influence.

I applaud the editor for acknowledging hip-hop. I only say that just as black history did not stop with Martin Luther King Jr., hip-hop is still alive. Hip-hop is not a music genre. Hip-hop is a lifestyle that pulsates through the veins of many 'b-boys' and 'b-girls' around the world. To put it simply, as long as I'm around, you can trust that hip-hop is alive.

Hip Hop's #1 Fan,
Keith D. Moses

Happiness in absence

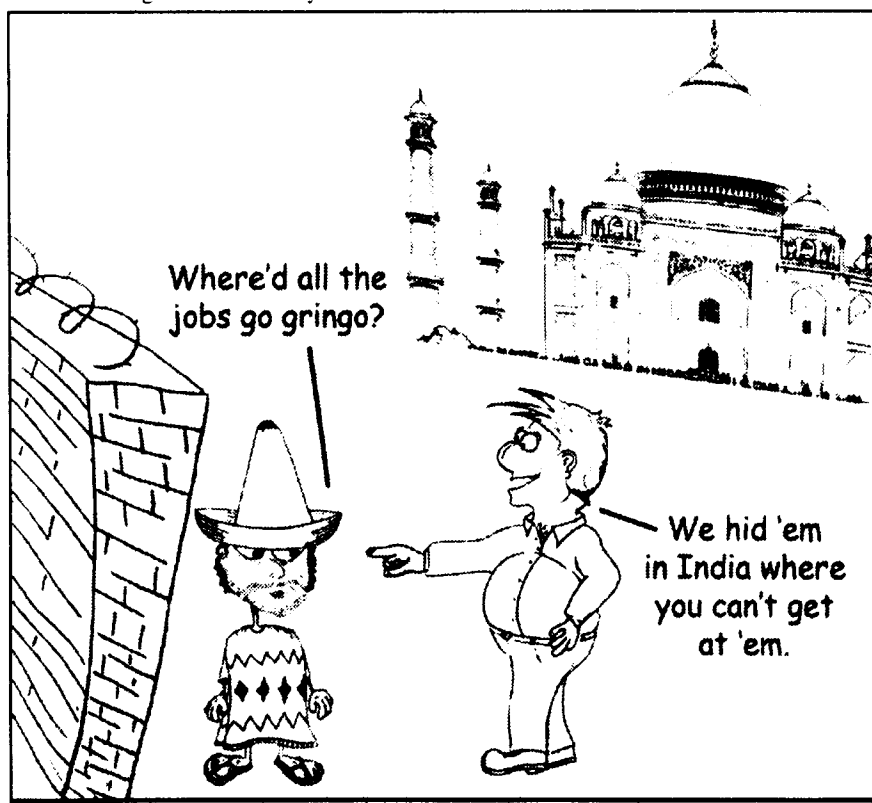
By Mike Sharkey
photography editor

Alone on campus in a moment of silence, I realized just how much truth can be found in the old phrase "absence makes the heart grow fonder."

I am a commuter, and I live with my parents and brother at home. When the big snowstorm came in on Tuesday night, I found myself snowed in at school and sleeping on a couch for the night. Being away from my family for even that brief while, I oddly found myself happier, rather than homesick. I slept better on that couch than I ever did in my own bed. The next day, I found that I had an extra bounce in my step and a gleeful smile on my face. I was able to spend time with friends on campus and read books that I previously didn't have time for. Then, on Wednesday, after classes, I headed back home and was immediately barged with the typical chatter, bickering and

white noise that typically comes from family members. It was at this point when I decided that maybe I ought to spend more time on campus, because I found that I could appreciate my family more when I wasn't with them!

Extrapolating this feeling towards other aspects of life, I can further see how absence can indeed make things better. Ex-girlfriends, for instance, make me much happier now that they are out of my life. An absence of sickness is also a light relief, especially when I see people around me trudging in misery in this stormy weather. Absence of noise helps me appreciate the silence that I so rarely hear. Absence of school is one I think all students can relate to. I'm not saying that the absence of school makes me "fonder" of it, but rather, it helps me appreciate life in general, which alleviates stress. Absence of stress, as you can guess, is also a good thing. So try to add a little absence in your life, and see if maybe you can find yourself a little happiness.



Concept by Jerry Pohl/ Artwork by Ben Raymond

Weather got you down? Work piling up? Feel free to write in and let us know how you feel! Opinion articles and Letters to the Editor can be submitted to jan219@psu.edu.

Cancellation, Schmancellation

By Jessica Samol
copy editor

Over the past few weeks, freezing temperatures and snowstorms have swept the Erie area. As a commuter student at Penn State Behrend, the recent weather has made my commute to class almost impossible. Slick road conditions accompanied by white outs have made my usual half-hour commute almost an hour. On days when the weather created severe road conditions, I had many close calls to being in a car accident. However, that did not stop me from making it to campus to follow the "Business as Usual" weather policy.

I could not believe that class was not cancelled on the days where weather conditions were severe. After talking to some of my peers in my classes, they

agreed that the weather conditions were horrible, but most of them lived on campus or were commuters that lived within five miles from campus. However, for me and a couple of my friends that live 20 or more miles from campus driving safely in horrible road conditions is quite a challenge. Opting to not risk driving on bad road conditions would be a reasonable choice, but when that means missing classes that have strict attendance policies, missing class does not seem to be a reasonable choice for me.

Some professors are very understanding when it comes to commuting in bad weather. However, there are some professors who probably are unaware of how far some commuters actually drive, and being late to class is unacceptable. Even when I leave extra early to commute, unplowed and icy roadways make every commute take an inestimable amount of time.

The only day classes were cancelled this year at Penn State Behrend was when there was the I-90 pileup, and classes were cancelled after 5 p.m. that day. When I commute to school I usually take I-90, and on that day, I just missed the big accident by about 15 minutes. Since then, there have been days when road conditions were just as bad if not worse. It is ironic that a huge accident created the reality that maybe the road conditions were very bad, and then the decision was made to finally cancel night classes for that day. In my opinion, the old saying "It's better to be safe than sorry" is a pretty logical way of thinking when having to drive in bad weather. However, I feel making it to class on time in whatever way it takes, has become my daily style for commuting when the road conditions are bad. Is it safe? Probably not, but when I need to attend class there seems to be no other option.

Submission Guidelines

The Beacon welcomes readers to share their views on this page. Letters and commentary pieces can be submitted by email to jan219@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.

The Behrend Beacon reserves the right to edit any submissions prior to publication.