

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

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THE BEHREND
Beacon



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Shifting the costs of war

By Chris Brown
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War costs money. War costs lives. War requires sacrifice. These are statements that many previous generations, soldiers, and their families and friends can attest to personally. But, little is asked of the American people to help support the war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. For the most part, unless you served, or know someone personally in the armed forces, it is hard to notice that a war is being waged, that lives are being lost. In an article published in *Structure and Dynamics*, James Moody, Associate Professor of Sociology at Duke University, estimates that "about 5.7 million Americans know a wounded soldier." Using established methods to determine the social impact of events, he estimates that 25 percent of Americans knew someone killed or wounded in Vietnam and in order to reach that level today another 250,000 soldiers would need to die or be wounded.

Strictly by the numbers, the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is staggering. So far, over \$700 billion has been spent for both. Neither have ever been included in the early budget and instead are considered off budget emergency supplemental bills. The true cost can never be known because figures do not express the costs of weapons procurement and modernizing equipment; not to mention the costs of providing health care for veterans in two wars that have seen an unprecedented number of veterans who will require life-long treatment

and rehabilitation. Already the health system for veterans is at a breakpoint and is struggling to meet the demands being asked. Its costs will increase over time as more and more veterans make demands on the health system.

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate in economics, estimates that the war in Iraq may end up costing \$2 trillion, (this figure includes projected health-care costs) but many place this estimate as a moderate projection because it is assumed that the United States will withdraw from Iraq by 2010.

These numbers are much larger than the Bush Administration projected before the war. The numbers them-

"5.7 million Americans know a wounded soldier."

- James Moody

selves are nothing new. Some would say the United States has been in costly wars before and came out just fine. This may be true, but the way the government is paying for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is fundamentally different than the funding of all previous wars. Essentially we are funding this war on credit. This differs from previous wars, where President's traditionally increased taxes to pay for war. For instance, Lyndon Johnson increased the income tax so everyone felt the effect of the war. Everyone shared in the hardships of the inflation spawned from the increased tax.

Today, no one feels the financial effects of the war except for soldiers

and their families. But, inevitably, someone will need to pay for these wars and unfortunately payments will start when we can least afford it. Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security costs are going to quickly outstrip the government's ability to pay for them. Bush is already threatening to veto a children's health insurance bill citing budget constraints. If this is a taste of what's to come then the future already looks bleak. Unfortunately, it will be people in the middle and lower classes who end up paying for these wars. A sad fact for the people who already make up a disproportionate number of the soldiers. They will be paying for it when the social welfare programs they rely on most get cut, the schools they send their children to lose more funding, and the income taxes they pay go up. They will be paying for it long after our soldiers have come home.

Karl Rove wrote that, "President Bush will be viewed as a far-sighted leader who confronted the key test of the 21st century," in an editorial before he resigned from his post as Advisor to the President. I disagree: Bush has failed to put any thought to the problem Americans will face in paying for his war of choice in Iraq, and unfortunately he and everyone in politics today will be long gone before they can be asked to account for their lack of vision and wasteful spending.

This is the first of a two-part series looking at the shifting costs of war and its effect on American citizens. The next part will focus on the human cost of war.

Don't stay together for the kids

By Jeff DeBello
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One of the stories most talked about in current celebrity gossip is the custody battle between Britney Spears and Kevin Federline over their two children. This is one of the most controversial topics being discussed in modern celebrity politics and it is quite obvious that there is not going to be an easy solution. Jayden James and Sean Preston have been set up from birth to have a life in the public eye. The very public battle over who is to be their primary guardian is certainly not going to make it any less true.

After spending the better part of a decade at the top of the charts and on top of the world, Spears appeared to lose control. After her first attempt at marriage ended after a mere 54 hours to childhood friend Jason Alexander her life seemed to spiral downward. Along her way to the bottom Spears married former back-up dancer Federline, who, until that time, had remained under the public radar and no one really knew him. During their time together it was clear that the once motivated Spears had given up her throne as pop queen. The two soon married and Spears' antics seemed to get worse as time passed. She was on the cover of tabloids for what seemed like an entire year.

From walking into truck stop bathrooms barefoot, to driving her car with her baby on her lap unrestrained, Spears seemed to know just what to do to lessen her credibility as a mother. As Spears and Federline's marriage began to crumble, so too it seemed did her last shreds of sanity. One of the oddest things she did was, after a long night of partying, she entered a hair salon and proceeded to shave

off all of her hair. To explain the decision to go hairless Spears said that she was donating the hair to charity.

Not long after the shaving, Spears realized that her image had taken enough of a hit, and she did what was expected of celebrities: she checked herself into rehab. She spent a good amount of time in the Promises rehab facility, but almost immediately after her release she went right back to the late-night party lifestyle.

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After behaving badly for the first two years of her children's lives how could she even think of getting custody of them? I personally don't know, but she apparently does. Recently, Spears finally got the charges of child abuse filed against her to be dropped, but that definitely shouldn't be enough to get the state to grant her custody of the children. Federline's attorney has recently petitioned to get 70-30 custody of the children and due to his moderate behavior I don't see why the court won't grant it to him.

Personally, I think this whole situation is a mess. If it weren't for the off-the-wall behavior of Spears there wouldn't even be a custody battle, but she obviously doesn't want custody that badly because she is acting like she is losing her mind. The fact that this whole process has been held in the public spotlight for such a long time all but ensures that Jayden James and Sean Preston will grow up haunted by it.

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.

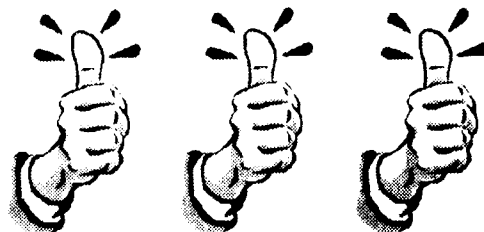
Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run the submission.

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.

Have an opinion? Want to see something changed on campus? Share it with the rest of the student body. *The Behrend Beacon* is always accepting articles for submission. E-mail Chris LaFuria at csl5005@psu.edu if you are interested in writing.

Beacon Thumbs Up



- NFL Season starting
- Pudding
- Jim Gaffigan coming to Behrend
- Club Rush
- Penn State tailgating

Beacon Thumbs Down



- Lack of pizza
- Lack of parking
- Parking tickets after 5 pm in the Reed lot
- Broken computers
- Disney's version of *Doug*

My life as a freshman

By Rachel Reeves
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"How many freshmen do we have?" inquires my professor. Timidly the 10 of us raise our hands, eyes downcast. Upperclassmen groan and curse softly, and the professor's face falls a little bit. Instead of taking offense, we simply hang our heads in further shame.

We know. We know what lost, pathetic human beings we are. We know. For the first two nights I ate salad, just because I didn't know where the rest of the food was, and anyways the lines were too long. I stood there layering on chicken bits and croutons, trying desperately to make a meal out of it. Every morning for a week I sat at breakfast eyeing other people's orange juice. "People are drinking it, there must be juice somewhere in this wretched place. There just has to be," I thought to myself. I finally found it, although this morning lemonade came out of the orange juice tap.

I can never remember the step down coming out of the Science building, and I have stumbled out the door every single day this week. Far too many times I have stood on the porch of my residence hall, slowly spinning on the spot, trying to figure out which way my destination lays. When I walk out of a building at night, the campus looks so hopelessly different that I become thoroughly lost again.

I blush when I pass strangers on the way to my shower, covered only by my towel, and bathing with flip flops on is just plain comical. It's hard getting used to treating my ID card and room key like another appendage instead of

just another thing to remember. Not as strange, however, as going days at a time without exchanging any kind of currency. I'm going to go home and hand my ID card to some poor cashier at Wegman's, who will then have to ask for real, actual money.

Writing and highlighting in my textbooks still feels like a crime. I never have the courage to add to class discussions, and all of my questions are stupid ones. A syllabus is a foreign concept to me; shouldn't the professors be writing quiz dates and homework assignments on the board?

Writing and highlighting in my textbooks still feels like a crime.

Before arrival, I got so caught up in the fact that I would be living away from home and managing my own life, I had forgotten that I was still going to school. Now I'm getting slammed with a couple hundred pages of reading a night, a few papers a week, and constant exams. I recently found myself sitting in the library, eyes bleary, mind numb, dimly thinking, "this isn't so different, after all."

So please, give us time. We'll get there. Already we can find some buildings without thinking too hard about it. We know where to find the Chinese food and the ice cream. We're beginning to scrawl through our textbooks with more confidence. We're starting to think that maybe we can survive here. And that makes us so much more bearable.