

OPINION

THE BEHREND BEACON

FOUNDED IN 1948

Penn State Erie,
The Behrend College
Reed Union Building
4701 College Drive, Erie PA
16563
Room 10H
Telephone: (814) 898-6488
Fax: (814) 898-6019

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Submission Guidelines:

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.

The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Please include your major, faculty, or administration position and semester standing. Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue.

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

Please keep complaints as specific as possible.

Email submissions to rcr5057@psu.edu or drop them off at the Beacon office.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:
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.

Beacon Thumbs Up



- Punxsutawney Phil
- Super Bowl commercials
- Fifty cent talkies (because that's what they called it)
- That's what she said

Beacon Thumbs Down



- First round of exams
- Mandatory science credits
- The windchill factor
- That's what he said

Choosing provision over freedom

By Rachel Reeves
opinion editor
rcr5057@psu.edu

Bureaucracy." "Red tape." "Paperwork." "Waiting list." These are words that make the average American nauseous. So you would think that the issue of universal healthcare would be a no-brainer, instead of one of the most central issues in the election.

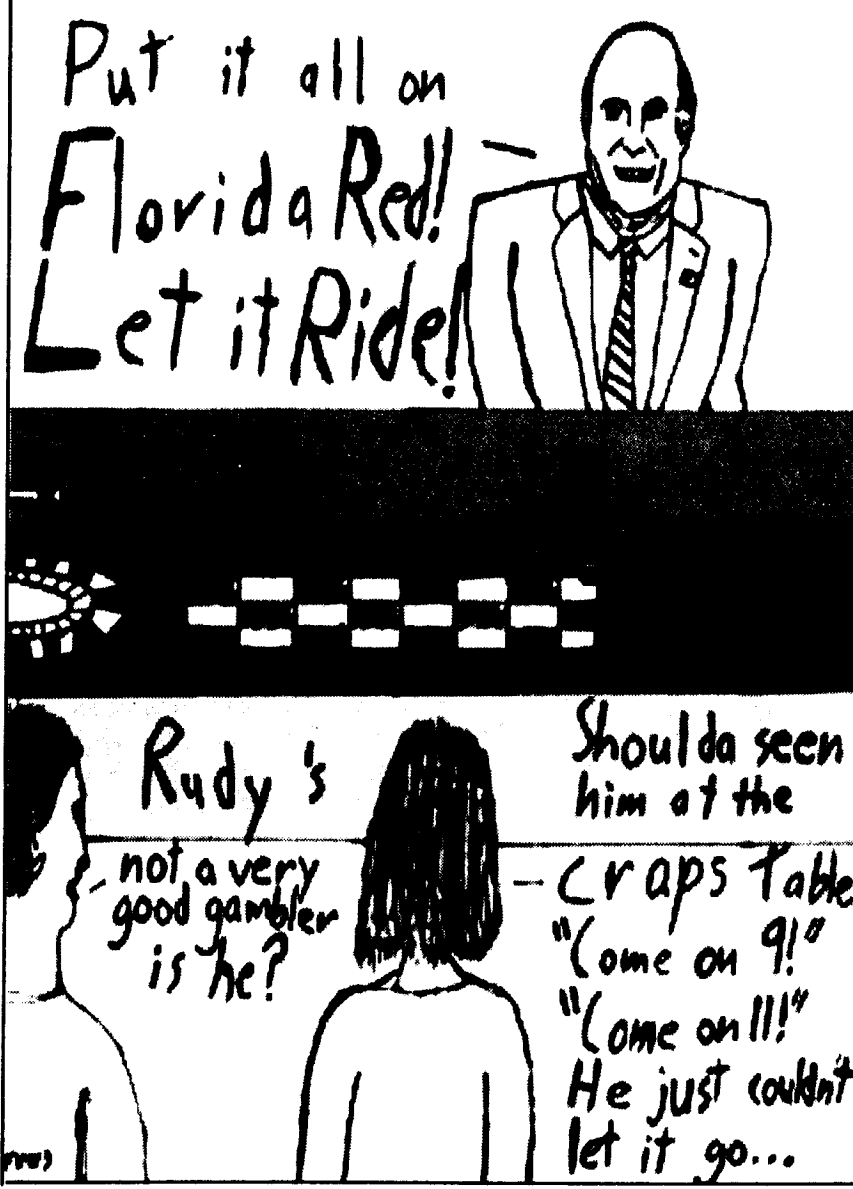
Social Security is beginning its crash-and-burn spiral, and the taxation of the American public is unequal and a little illogical. So why would we hand over our healthcare as well? The truth is that when we hand our money over to the government a good percentage evaporates. Not necessarily because the government is corrupt or careless (although some would say so) but because there is no way a system that large can be as efficient as independent management.

Universal healthcare would have several adverse effects on the general population. First of all, government would have to decide who deserves what amount of money for healthcare, and this would mean investigation. Information like your family's medical history, your weight, your smoking/drinking habits and your eating and exercising habits would be relevant to the calculations. Those who are

uncomfortable with the idea of the government listening in on their phone calls should consider this very possible turn of events.

Also, America is not a very healthy country. U.S. Government Information says that at least 64 percent of Americans are overweight, and 32 percent of Americans are obese. This leads to diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and different kinds of cancer. Currently about 25 percent of Americans smoke, although this number is steadily decreasing. This leads to problems like cancer and chronic respiratory illnesses. Total, over one third of American deaths are the result of obesity, poor eating habits, or smoking.

A country in which one out of three people die of preventable causes should not have public healthcare. Yes, there is a strain on medical funds right now. But is the answer making it a universal concern, or each person taking responsibility for his or her own health? America, whose identity is a strong and independent one, is leaning more and more on the government for protection and provision. We are more and more willing to give up privacy and the freedom to make our own choices in exchange of support. It is not the mentality that built America, and it is not the mentality that will keep it going strong.



CARTOON CONTRIBUTED BY FRANK WELTNER

Juicycampus.com: A flashback to middle school

By Rachel Reeves
opinion editor
rcr5057@psu.edu

Middle school was a dark time in my life, as for most people. Cooties was gradually relinquishing its hold on the boy population, but since the quarantine was not to be lifted until at least Jr. High, most of my association was with the other girls in my grade. Girls were just coming to terms with a new kick of estrogen entering their systems, which is deadly when paired with newfound awkwardness and insecurity. The result was a harsh and confusing world; no one knew who they could trust or where they stood in this new society.

There were methods to finding your footing. I quickly discovered. Catching snatches of whispered conversation in the hallways, peeking at "BFF" notebooks, in which friends shared thoughts, observations, and inside jokes when they were separated by classes for more than 40 agonizing minutes, and keeping record of who was invited to which hangouts.

Still, the bathroom wall remained supreme. It was the ultimate punishment; if you had done anything spectacularly horrifying or unseemly your faux pas would be recorded forever on those highly public walls. That is, until someone reported something so disrespectful that a custodian would have to repaint the wall, which happened roughly once a semester.

Fortunately we all grew out of that phase. Girls and boys learned to mingle, friendships became more solid, and people learned to generally mind their own business and live their own lives. I came to college ready for whatever transformation happens in these four years to transition a person from a mere kid to an adult with a steady job and a 401K. Ready to step out into the

grown-up world.

Then today, clicking through Facebook while taking a break from studying, I saw an advertisement for JuicyCampus.com. A tagline ran underneath: "Always anonymous, always juicy." With a strange sense of foreboding I clicked, and my worst fears were confirmed. It is an online gossip site strictly for major universities, where anyone can post whatever they feel like saying without identification.

It brought everything back. The white eyeliner, the two strands of hair pulled out of the ponytail hanging over your face, the Old Navy flag tees, the oh-so awkward first dances and the overheard comments that made you want to cry for days. The cliques, the viciously false rumors, broken friendships, and the sense that you would never, ever belong on planet earth.

After my heart rate slowed and my palms stopped sweating, I began to investigate. Each college has its own page divided into sections like "overheard on campus," or "students," or "faculty/administration." Anyone can start a message board, and others can add to it by posting a comment or voting its "juiciness." Most boards are fairly harmless and frivolous, like "Admit your secret crush," or "Where have all the hott, single guys gone?" Others include stories about nameless people who made fools of themselves in bars or at parties.

Then I clicked to see the most discussed boards for all universities included in the website, and it got darker. Number four was a post from Loyola, and had the title "Too many blacks/mexicans?" It began, "Seriously? Why do I have to pay for their education? I thought the high tuition was supposed to keep the undesirables out?" It continued with cruel stereotyping

and sarcasm. This board had 53 replies, some from offended students, some from faculty reprimanding the comments, but also some from those who supported the statements and furthered the racist language and stereotyping.

I do believe in public forum and freedom of expression. However, anonymously posting purposeless hate for the entire world to see is a very different matter. I thought that people participating in American higher education would be above this level of ignorance and hate, or at least have the courage to stand behind their statements and face the consequences.

Juicycampus.com is a glorified bathroom wall. Except that there is no janitor to cover hateful words in mismatched paint, there is no one to draw the line in the sand. It is mostly light and inconsequential now, but people are already tapping into its power and simultaneous protection. The website is every middle school student's dream - awesome influence without one shred of responsibility. It is also every middle school student's nightmare - a vicious, undeserved attack from an enemy you can't even see. Either way, it is just another excuse to avoid growing up.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Everything is relative when you're the one in charge

By Chris Brown
copy editor
cmb5313@psu.edu

It's that time of the year again. No, I'm not talking about the Super Bowl; but the State of the Union Address. For the past eight years I've dreaded the event, but this one actually called for some celebration. After all, the speech on Monday, Jan. 28 was Bush's last one ever. That means no more embarrassing mispronunciations (nucular) and no more Bushesque titterings (eh eh eh eh) at failed attempts of humor. How this man ever convinced a minority of voters to support him in the 2000 election with his perpetual deer-in-the-headlights look for every speech given is beyond my comprehension.

My biggest problem with his last address centers on a statement he made about the War on Terror. He said, "We will stay on the offense, we will keep up the pressure, and we will deliver justice to the enemies of America." The only problem is, I'm not quite sure America or Bush know the meaning of these words anymore. From any other mouth at any other time, these words would be inspiring, but from Bush's

mouth, these powerful words ring hollow. Bush's declaration of justice is irrelevant if he has no understanding of what the word actually means.

What is justice? Is it holding prisoners indefinitely, without an open trial, or means to provide for their defense (Guantanamo)? Is it whisking away suspects, convicted of nothing and in more than a few cases wrongly accused, in the middle of the night and outsourcing their torture to countries whose constitutions provide nothing in their defense (CIA Clandestine Prisons)? Does the United States 'deliver' justice to the people living under oppressive regimes when it turns a blind eye to those governments' indiscretions as long as these governments support the United States in the War on Terror (Pakistan, Israel)?

Just a few days after Bush's speech on Jan. 30, Attorney General Mike Mukasey dodged questions on Capitol Hill about the classification of simulated drowning, aka waterboarding (not to be confused with wakeboarding), and whether or not the interrogation technique was torture. Mukasey said that he would feel like it was torture if it was done to him, but would have to consider the circumstances for others. In the world of Bush it seems every word is relative, to each his own measure I suppose.

Unfortunately, Bush's version of justice is the only thing other countries and would-be terrorists have come to expect from the U. S. Government. Extremists, threatening to attack America, have expended a great amount of energy and time decrying the United States as faithless, cowardly, and unprincipled. And for the last eight years, we have lent credence to their arguments, made their jobs easier than they should be.

Terrorists don't deserve a fair and open trial because we respect their tactics or support their cause. No, they deserve justice in its truest sense, not Bush's misappropriation of the term, because the average American citizen and people around the

world should be trusted to make the right decisions. We should be able to see these extremists for who they really are. Under no circumstances should the government give these failed ideologies the pleasure of receiving the very treatment from the American government they have been preaching about all along.

After WWII, the United States made a point to go out of its way in holding fair, public trials for war criminals at Nuremberg. The Soviet Union and United Kingdom resisted, but U.S. officials held their ground because they knew perception and actions are everything when it comes to winning a war against totalitarian ideologies; they must be exposed for what they are. Regrettably, our current leaders have failed to heed this lesson.

If anything, fanatics deserve a cut above contemporary conceptions of justice because that is the last thing they expect from a nation they have spent their lives vilifying. I'm not an expert on terrorism. I can't tell you when or how the next terrorist attack will occur. Anyone that claims to know such knowledge is either full of it, or wise beyond my comprehension. However, by virtue of being born (something common among all humans, including terrorists), I do consider myself an expert on human rights. I know what rights I have as a human. Unfortunately, more than ever before in my life, I feel the government has forgotten its duty to protect and respect these rights.

Our government's roots lie in the belief that "that all men[sic] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator[sic] with certain unalienable Rights," not just for the few who hold power, or those who are under attack. Our founders wrote the Declaration of Independence not only as representatives of the colonies, but as human beings exercising their rights as such. Perhaps they created too high of a standard, for our government barely recognizes the rights of its own citizens, let alone any others.



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