

# 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

### Executive Board

Christopher LaFuria, *Editor-in-Chief*  
Andy McLachlan, *Co-Editor-in-Chief*  
Scott Muska, *Managing Editor*  
Tiffany Flynn, *Advertising Manager*  
Michelle Quail, *Advertising Editor*  
Kim Young, *Faculty Adviser*

### Editorial Staff

Lenny Smith, *News Editor*  
M. Schwabenbauer, *asst. News Editor*  
Rachel Reeves, *Opinion Editor*  
Jess Carlson, *Sports Editor*  
Scott Muska, *Student Life Editor*  
Ryan P. Gallagher, *Music Editor*  
Chris Brown, *Copy Editor*  
Jennifer Juncosa, *Copy Editor*  
Evan Koser, *Copy Editor*  
Jeremy K., *Humor/Photography Editor*  
Connor Sattely, *Entertainment Editor*  
Keegan McGregor, *Photo Editor*

## 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. Thursday 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](mailto: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



- College Democrats
- [thebehrendbeacon.com](http://thebehrendbeacon.com)
- SGA elections
- Rocky

### Beacon Thumbs Down



- Credentials
- Alarm clocks
- Donut bribes
- Incompetence

## Behrend gets the spotlight in '08

By Chris Brown  
copy editor  
cmb53131@psu.edu

I can't help but feel spoiled this primary season. Many of our parents, professors and family members have never voted in a Pa. primary that could decide who the candidates for the President would be. Now, in only my second chance to vote in a Presidential Primary, I have the opportunity to be a part of history. With four separate campaign stops, including President Bill Clinton, his daughter Chelsea, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) Erie has taken center stage. I'm not sure we'll have this opportunity ever again and we need to take full advantage of it.

The Behrend Administration, the College Democrats, both campaigns and anyone else that helped bring these political candidates and figures to campus deserve praise. Even if you don't agree with some of their policies, one can still appreciate the presence of these major figures who many years from now, when the campaigns are long over, will be names in history books. Tuesday will be a bittersweet day, no matter the outcome as the candidates move on they will address the issues of other constituents in other states. I've enjoyed it while it's lasted and it's given me the

opportunity to be an active participant in the election.

The thing that surprised me about Kennedy was that none of what he said had to do with attacking Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY). He only mentioned her obliquely as Obama's "opponent." Likewise, President Clinton barely mentioned Obama. This is the way the primaries should have been carried out from the very beginning, not so much as an attack on one another, but a chance to let the American people know what each candidate can do for America, not what is wrong with the others. While slightly different in delivery and style, Kennedy and Clinton's speeches could have been swapped with one another and little would have been lost. Both candidates, Hillary and Barack, are so similar on substantive issues.

Instead, this election will be decided more on people's impression of each candidate's style and likeability. After 15 months on the campaign trail, the primary has devolved into a glorified popularity contest. Having exhausted every possible difference on the issues, the candidates have resorted to petty character attacks and most of the media has been too happy to oblige the coverage. Whether it is insinuating that Obama somehow has to answer for the past transgressions of a neighbor, or endlessly covering "Bosnia-gate '08." Clinton

is characterized as the fighter. Obama as the candidate who can unite a diverse America. Voters will have to decide which strategy will be more effective in Washington.

The debate on Wednesday, April 16, highlighted another problem that has plagued the Democratic Party for the past few years. Both candidates, and judging by the line of questioning the commentators also, seemed worried about what the Republican Party will say and do come the general election than anything else. Instead of being concerned about what each candidate says, if their reasoning is sound, and if their politics are clean, the race has turned into who is the most "electable", as opposed to who is the better candidate.

This may seem counterintuitive, but we have to get our priorities straight and determine what exactly is "electable." Democrats can't worry about what type of attack ads Republicans will run and lose focus of the message at hand. Insinuations of impropriety will only hurt them in the end, both candidates need to get trust their message. I don't want a candidate that stands for nothing because they are too worried about saying anything controversial. In the last debate, both candidates hesitated on questions about taxes, and both were unwilling to take a stand on issues that could have defined their candidacies.

## Behind the news at the Beacon

By Jennifer Juncosa  
copy editor  
jbj5061@psu.edu

With 48 hours to prepare for Presidential candidate Barack Obama, the Behrend Beacon staff started the process of covering the epic event.

Along with the other Behrend students, the first order of business was to obtain one of the 250 free, but mandatory, tickets. For 35 minutes, I waited in line to receive a ticket. With only two hours before a mandatory meeting, I had to have dinner, get homework done and relax because the next 48 hours of my life was going to be dedicated to the paper. The meeting took five hours to plan out the coverage of Obama dealt with who would write what story, contacts we needed, and Beacon press passes and the needed credentials for the rally.

The first setback of the Obama coverage was lack of Behrend Beacon press passes. The coverage meeting was put on hold for a run to Wal-Mart to make two passes, one for myself and one for the assistant news editor. Wal-Mart's photo center closed two hours prior, so four journalism students ended up on the phone with 411, trying to find a place to get pictures printed. After remembering that I have a photo printer and photo paper, we made our own press passes. Problem solved? Not quite. To get press coverage for someone as big as Obama, the Beacon staff needs credentials through the Obama campaign. The next day we were informed only one reporter and one photographer were allowed to have credentials.

Thursday was supposed to be carefully planned but busy. Attending classes, of course, was not an option for anyone on the staff. My first interview was going to be at 12:30 p.m. That gave me plenty of time to sleep in, which worked out because I didn't get to bed till 3 a.m. I was showered, dressed and doing my hair when I got a phone call saying that the interview was going to be moved to 11:30 a.m. So with my hair half curled and completely undone, I grabbed my notebook, press pass and voice recorder.

The interview was quick and informative. After that, my life was completely dedicated to the Beacon. Until my next appointment, at 8 p.m., I was sitting in the Beacon production office writing, researching, writing, writing emails to important contacts, writing, putting up flyers, writing, adding videos and blogs to the Beacon website, writing, and calling the printer to ask politely if we can print a little later so we could include the Obama coverage.

Beacon reporters were in the production office till 12:30 a.m. and were expected to be lucid and at Junker by 7:30 a.m. Entertainment editor, Connor Sattely, was at the Junker at 6:15 a.m. and was able to contact all Beacon staff to inform us that we all had full Obama credentials. When you don't answer your phone the day of an event, we just come to your dorm room and wake you up in person.

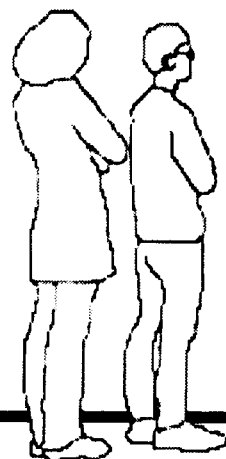
During Obama's rally, the Beacon staff had credentials to sit in the area reserved for local press, so Beacon reporters sat behind WICU and WSEE.

After Obama's appearance, the job of a Beacon reporter was not finished. The staff came together in the newsroom to finish last minutes details. Finish stories, finish layout and send the paper out to the printer. Then, and only then, do we finally go home.

## OBAMA '08

Junker Center Entrance

"So you are saying we can't get into our own school?"



Cartoon by Jennifer Juncosa



## Don't be bitter - reconsider

By Bryce Alexander Sayers  
staff writer  
bas5000@psu.edu

I have lived in Pennsylvania for almost my whole life, so I think I have enough of a claim to being a Pennsylvanian when it comes to issues such as Barack Obama's comments. I am not offended by his statement that we are bitter and turn to guns or religion to vent frustration. If anything I would be more offended if he apologized for the remark. It's not exactly an innocuous statement and even if it was worded more effectively I could see his opponents turning it against him, but in order to prove himself as a candidate with convictions he has to make risky statements.

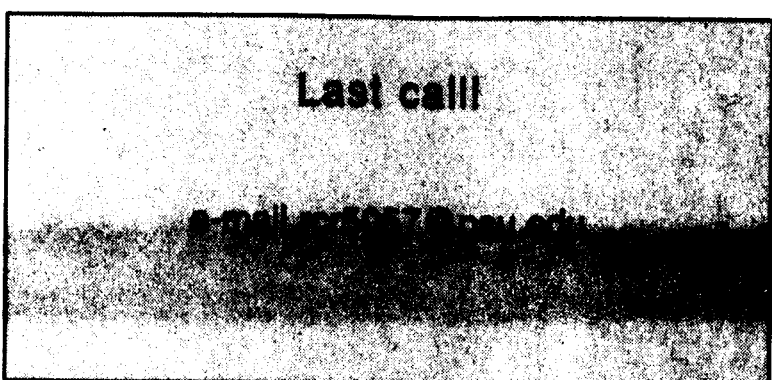
Obama calling religion something that people turn to in times of frustration is a reiteration of an old fact that has been spun by both the anti-religious and those arguing in favor of them. Karl Marx was perhaps the most notorious example when he wrote "Religion is the opiate of the masses." That sentence is now a catchphrase among atheists, but on its own is it an anti-religious statement? In the context of Marx's time opiates were viable painkillers. Few minds would condemn the use of painkillers in a time of

need, so observing the tendency for people to invest deeper in the metaphysical in times of suffering is not intrinsically condemnation. Soren Kierkegaard was both a philosopher and a Christian. Kierkegaard called man's drive for spirituality "the sickness unto death." What modern day politician wooing value-voters with expressions of their faith could ever imagine, not a "personal relationship" or a "divine calling" but a sickness. Such a metaphor from Obama might have ignited an "Euthanists for Hillary" campaign.

The controversy also highlights another legend of American politics, that the average American is politically isolated. It can be argued that when politicians fail the masses they tend to retreat from day-to-day politics, especially on the national level. The problem is that politics is an omnipresent force in civilized society. It can – and is, worked into everyday subtly and at a slow pace, but to believe that noninvolvement in politics guarantees non-interference is folly. People then feel a general, nebulous disenfranchisement that compounds those problems we truly can't affect. Obama tried to pinpoint these problems as the economic crisis, but it can reach broader. All the same, people then turn to local commu-

nities based on common interests for emotional support, and instead of voting based on pragmatic needs and interests, they vote guided by the leaders of their groups with unspecific agendas. This leads to a special kind of voter apathy, the "wedge issues" Obama claimed were being over-represented in the latest debate: morality legislation, token laws over gun control or symbolic acts of a figurehead leader to name a few. It's not wrong to have opinions on these issues, it is even just to vote for them if convictions deem so, but they are over-emphasized in the media and by those opportunistic leaders who are often co-opting with political leaders determined to ride out fluff careers maintaining the status quo.

Obama's statement was a challenge to this system, just as his early campaign had won a broad spectrum of support to challenge the notions of severe "red/blue" divides. The voters of Pennsylvania now face the challenge of accepting this harsh – yet insightful criticism. Opponents, gun lobbyists and demagogues alike will call for their audiences to grow enraged and vote against him, but then they would only be proving him right.



*I think the world needs...*

summer. Are the last few weeks of school really that important? Let's just cut to the chase and hit the beach already. Ice cream, bike rides, trampolines, entire afternoons spent by the pool. I mean, I could spend these gorgeous days in class or in the library, studying. But I would rather not.