

## PERSPECTIVES

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

Rachel Reeves, *Editor-in-Chief*  
Connor Sattely, *Managing Editor*  
Michelle Quail, *Advertising Manager*  
Kim Young, *Faculty Adviser*

## Editorial Staff

Ryan P. Gallagher, *News Editor*  
M. Schwabenbauer, *College Life Editor*  
Neil J. Peters, *Asst. College Life Editor*  
Jennifer Juncosa, *Perspectives Editor*  
Connor Sattely, *Sports Editor*  
Evan Koser, *Arts Editor*  
Emily Reichert, *Copy Editor*  
Marcus Yeagley, *Copy Editor*  
Jeremy Korwek, *Website Editor*  
Keegan McGregor, *Photography Editor*  
Daniel Smith, *Senior Photographer*

Submission  
Guidelines:

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries 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 it.

The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Please include your major, faculty, or administration position and semester standing. Deadline for any submission is 3 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 [jdj5061@psu.edu](mailto:jdj5061@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



- Star Wars...I guess
- Extra pizza
- Evidence of readers
- Editor training

## Beacon Thumbs Down



- Tambourines
- Responsibilities
- Slow upgrades
- Stalkers and creepers

## Letter to the editor

To the editor:

A few clicks of the mouse reveal that approximately three quarters of Daniel J. Smith's September 12 Behrend Beacon opinion piece in support of Governor Sarah Palin ("Governor Palin believed to have more experience than Senator Obama") is plagiarized word for word from the internet. For evidence compare Smith's article to the 2 September entry at [http://sarahpalin-johnmccain.blogspot.com/2008\\_09\\_01\\_archive.html](http://sarahpalin-johnmccain.blogspot.com/2008_09_01_archive.html), a blog written by a self-described teacher, and <http://wataugarepubs.blogspot.com/2008/09/shes-still-one.html>, a blog from Watauga County, North Carolina.

Students who plagiarize to this extent in my classes receive failing grades for the course. Some might consider this a harsh penalty, so allow me to explain it. Given the case before us, perhaps a political analogy would help. With lies, deception, and the swiftboating of the opponent it is possible to win an election, but such methods offer a flimsy foundation for governance. As the Iraq War has vividly demonstrated, policies based on falsehoods almost inevitably collapse like a house of cards in the face of unavoidable and immovable

realities. Likewise, a student who cheats his or her way to a Penn State degree is unlikely to graduate to future success. Not having worked hard to earn the degree, the graduate will not have developed a work ethic or gained the skills needed in the job market or graduate education. At the first significant challenge, his or her lack of education will become evident, and the lie exposed. Dismissal from the job or failure at graduate school will likely result. Worse, employers and graduate schools will consider the student's deceit to be Penn State's, Penn State's reputation will be damaged, and all Penn State degrees will be devalued.

Like lies in politics, cheating in academics comes at a significant social cost. All students benefit when cheating is sanctioned, and, I would argue, all Americans benefit when the public votes against outrageous liars.

Michael Christofferson  
Associate professor of history

## Letter from the editor

Student newspapers have a particular hazard - inexperience. In most cases, the people producing the paper have had little formal education: they are learning the art of journalism as they work. While this allows for a steep learning curve and valuable hands-on experience, it almost guarantees that several mistakes will slip through the cracks.

As the editor of a student newspaper, it is my priority to ensure that we provide accurate and unbiased information to the University. However, it is also important that the newspaper is a safe place where students can learn about a job they may be interested in.

Last week's opinion article, "Governor Palin believed to have more experience than Senator Obama," taught us more than we could learn in any journalism ethics class. The article consisted mostly of the talking points for the McCain campaign. However, the author of this article had written permission from the campaign director to use these talking points. The author also sat on the committee that wrote these talking points, so he was using many of his own words. The websites mentioned were actually using the words of the

campaign and from the author of this article, not the other way around.

However, that does not mean that the article was sound journalism. In the past week, we have learned that the ideas a campaign is running on should be attributed to that campaign when presented in an unbiased newspaper. We have learned that plagiarism even in this form is a serious offense, and we are in the process of crafting a policy so that future generations of the Beacon will know how to handle similar situations. Finally, we are setting up standards that will prevent an error like this from happening again.

Thank you, Professor Christofferson, for respecting the Beacon enough to hold it to a high standard. Feedback and evaluation are crucial parts of any learning process. Alerting us of this mistake inspired thorough study of some of journalism's most dangerous pitfalls: plagiarism and bias. As a result, we have been able to set in place guidelines that will make the Beacon a better publication not only now, but for years to come.

Rachel Reeves  
editor-in-chief



## Winning the surge, losing the war

"How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"  
John F. Kerry, April 23, 1973

By Christopher Brown  
contributing writer  
cmb5313@psu.edu

On January 10, 2007 President Bush announced a new strategy, the surge, for the war in Iraq with the goal of creating space for political reconciliation. This new strategy included an additional deployment of 30,000 troops to Baghdad and increased contact between soldiers and Iraqis. Muqtada al-Sadr also instituted a unilateral cease-fire of militia and attacks on the Americans. Sunni tribal leaders, sickened by the carnage of Al-Qaeda enticed by the prospect of American money, cracked down on extremists.

All of this contributed to the dramatic decline in violence Iraqis see today. However, there was never a question that violence would decrease if troop presence increased.

But will it last after the surge has ended? Any prediction on the success or failure of the surge before that occurs is premature.

Unfortunately, the Iraqis haven't made progress politically, a major goal of the surge. Last month the *New York Times* reported that the Shiite government in Iraq has begun arresting and killing Sunni tribal leaders against the wishes of U.S. commanders. The Iraqi government has also failed to reach an agreement on the upcoming election, risking their own legitimacy in the process. All of these risks renewed violence.

But Americans don't have this discus-

sion. This is a shame too, because the only way we can truly support our troops is by having an informed discussion about the situation in Iraq. Slogans and platitudes do little to help them.

It isn't that an informed discussion doesn't exist either, because our generals have been trying to have this conversation. For instance, during an interview with BBC News, General David Petraeus, the architect of the surge, was asked if he would ever use the word "victory" to describe the war in Iraq. Petraeus' response: "I don't know that I will, I think that all of us at different times have recognized the need for real restraint in our assessments and pronouncements if you will and we have tried to be very brutally honest and forthright in what we have provided with Congress, the press and ourselves. We say we have to be first with the truth."

Rather, media commentators, conservatives, and the McCain campaign reduce the conversation to catch-phrases and half-truths: "Barack Obama wants to lose a war to win an election" or "Obama wants to cut and run." Too often this war has been sugarcoated by the public and McCain seems intent on selling the war short, tell us that "victory is in sight" when, in fact, it isn't. Compare and contrast McCain's assessment against Petraeus'.

This doesn't mean I don't want victory, that I wish defeat upon this country, or that I don't appreciate the service of our soldiers and seamen. But, we as a country need to reassess our priorities and critically examine what victory means.

If victory means that the United States has advanced its strategic interests and

has a stronger position in the region than before the invasion, I fear that victory may be impossible. We can win this surge, but still lose this war.

There is little chance of us leaving Iraq in a stronger position than when we went in.

We have accomplished little given the costs of this war. Al-Qaeda was not in Iraq until we removed Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden is still at large. Iran is now in a stronger position because of a weak Iraq and a friendly Iraqi government. The United States has squandered the trust it gained from its Middle Eastern allies. In addition, our military is now stretched to the breaking point. Our ability to deter conflict before it begins has been diminished.

When comparing these "benefits" with the war's cost in lives, money, and American stature, it is difficult to ever imagine a victory worthy of the name. According to a report by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, over 223,000 civilians have died in Iraq and over 4,000 Americans have been killed in combat. We are spending over \$10 billion a month, while the Iraqi government has record surpluses thanks to the price of oil. When all is said and done, Nobel Laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz estimates it will have cost \$3 trillion.

Senator McCain likes to chide and fault Senator Obama for refusing to admit he was wrong on the surge. But I would like to know why McCain fails to acknowledge that this war was launched on false precepts, misinformation, and ultimately is a war the United States should never have started.

I'm a  
football virgin

By Jennifer Juncosa  
perspectives editor  
jdj5061@psu.edu

There is a chick-flick from 1999 about a 25-year-old reporter that had never been kissed. She goes to high school again as an undercover reporter and falls for one of the teachers. The teacher decides to move because he fell in love with a girl he thought was a student. In her article she writes about how she has never been kissed, asks him to forgive her, meet her at the pitcher's mound at the championship baseball game and kiss her. Needless to say, he comes at the last minute and kisses her.

Now, I have been kissed, but I haven't engaged in something most people my age have: I have never been to a football game, more importantly, a college football game. Embarrassing. I know. I spent most my childhood watching live baseball games but only watched football on television. Then I came to college and came across a problem: It's ridiculously hard to get tickets to Penn State games.

I admit this with a load of shame. I picked a school known for football. But let me assure that I do want to go to a football game-I have never had the opportunity. Who wouldn't?

There is the one man worth going to the game for: Joe Paterno. The head coach for the past four decades and change, the only one that can still pull off Reeboks and rolled up Khakis. There is the reputation of exceptional players, Paul Posluzny and Derrick Williams, that strike fear in opposing teams. Then there is the student section that ESPN magazine calls the best in the nation, the loudest and most proud. I regret never experiencing this.

I realize that not being a part of the football experience has left my friends hanging their heads in disbelief and my brothers, Penn State alumni, feeling nothing but shame. This year I will go to a game. I planned my first time to be the Michigan game this October but with the price of tickets climbing rapidly and the fact that the ticket my brother offered at a reduced price was given to his girlfriend, my life-long dream is slowly dissolving.

So, I propose this: I will be sitting in the lower level of the Reed Union building every Friday afternoon for the rest of the season. I ask that anyone willing to give their ticket to a good cause, meet and help me fulfill my dream. Help me experience my school the way I should.

## Letter to the editor: McCain is wrong for our party

I hope that most of my fellow conservatives are Republican, not because the phonemes of that word sound nice, but because of the ideas that our party has sought to realize since the 1964 Goldwater takeover. Today, John McCain is the nominee of the Republican party, and as I'm an old-school conservative I cannot support his candidacy and I urge all conservatives to have a long hard look at McCain.

McCain's lack of our party's credentials are evident if one looks at his record. He authored a bill with Sen.

Feingold (D-WI) that restricted free speech and financial support of candidates. He also voted against tax cuts that kept our country out of recession in the early part of the decade. In other words, he voted for high taxes. McCain voted to expand Medicare further, burdening working families and our economy, and has opposed opening ANWR for oil exploration. Moreover, McCain joined the liberal Democratic leadership in trying to ram through amnesty through the Congress in the dead of the night. Amnesty legislation would give any

illegal alien a "Z-visa," which in essence is permanent residence, and this would eventually lead to citizenship while millions of people who are waiting to come here legally would be left in the dark.

Another reason why we should not vote for him is because he did not win a single early primary through Republican vote. Exit polls show that it was independents and party switchers that put McCain over the top in New Hampshire, South Carolina and Florida. Not to mention the slash and burn campaign he ran against Romney and the

belittling of Huckabee and Paul.

This brings up the question; who should conservatives vote for when the choice is between two liberals: McCain or Obama? The answer can be found in ourselves, but I will turn out for local, state and Congressional races while sitting at home for the presidency and waiting until 2012.

Mladen Grgic  
economics major