

OUR VIEW

Passage of bypass tax means loss of business

Nice job, Kirksville voters. Once more, you've managed to miss the forest through the trees. Passing the ballot issue to continue funding the Highway 63 bypass might very well be one of the most ill-conceived decisions you've ever made. The decision not only demonstrates laziness, but also short-sightedness and simple ignorance of business acumen.

Now, we know that traffic takes a chunk out of your day. We get that. But honestly, complaints about a long drive time from one end of Kirksville to the other can be chucked out the window with a brief little phrase: La Harpe to Osteopathy to Northtown.

Those simple words, when applied at the proper time, will save hours of your life during the course of a year. But even if you decide you can't be bothered to take a different route, the fact that you must wait an additional five to 10 minutes for a semitruck is not justification for a bypass. Also, noise pollution from these trucks, in our humble opinion, is among the least of Kirksville's problems. The bypass will cost millions of dollars in taxes, monies which are better spent on fixing the roads we have — have you driven through the crater zones of Normal Avenue or Patterson Street lately?

But barring the fact that the bypass is unnecessary, it also shows a distinct lack of common sense. The short-sightedness of the decision to build the bypass is clear when you take a look around the Square. In spite of the sign on Baltimore Street directing visitors to the "Business District" on the Square, the majority of businesses in Kirksville operate on or near the Baltimore Street strip — exactly where traffic is at its highest.

Intelligent observers would note that the first bypass didn't seem to help the "Business District" out much. Routing 63 onto Baltimore has hurt downtown so badly that Business 63 (along Franklin Street) was decommissioned in 2002. When the bypass is built, our current Baltimore Street likely will be designated Business 63 — but a lot of good that did for the businesses on the old one.

So we come to our final point about the foolishness of this bypass: For all the complaints about traffic in this city, we have probably heard two or three times as many about the lack of jobs around here. But unfortunately the factories are never coming back, and Kirksvillians need to know that. However, there always will be financial and service industry jobs here. They might not be the most desirable or career-driven jobs, but they're jobs, and they're filled by Kirksville residents who are among our most vulnerable to economic pressures. The way to preserve their livelihoods is to maintain high traffic in areas where our businesses already are.

Take it from us, a group of perennial commuters from St. Louis and Kansas City to Kirksville: People hate getting off the freeway to get to restaurants and fuel, and it doesn't matter that Kirksville is the only major hub between Moberly and Iowa.

This, of course, is not what the Missouri Highway Department wants you to believe. After all, its job is to build roads. So its response to this concern is the same today as it was more than a decade ago:

"Really, if people want to go to those businesses, they will," the district construction engineer for MoDOT told an Index reporter — way back in September 1996. Tragically, that attitude ignores what happened to businesses on the Square, a devilish warning to businesses now located on Baltimore Street.

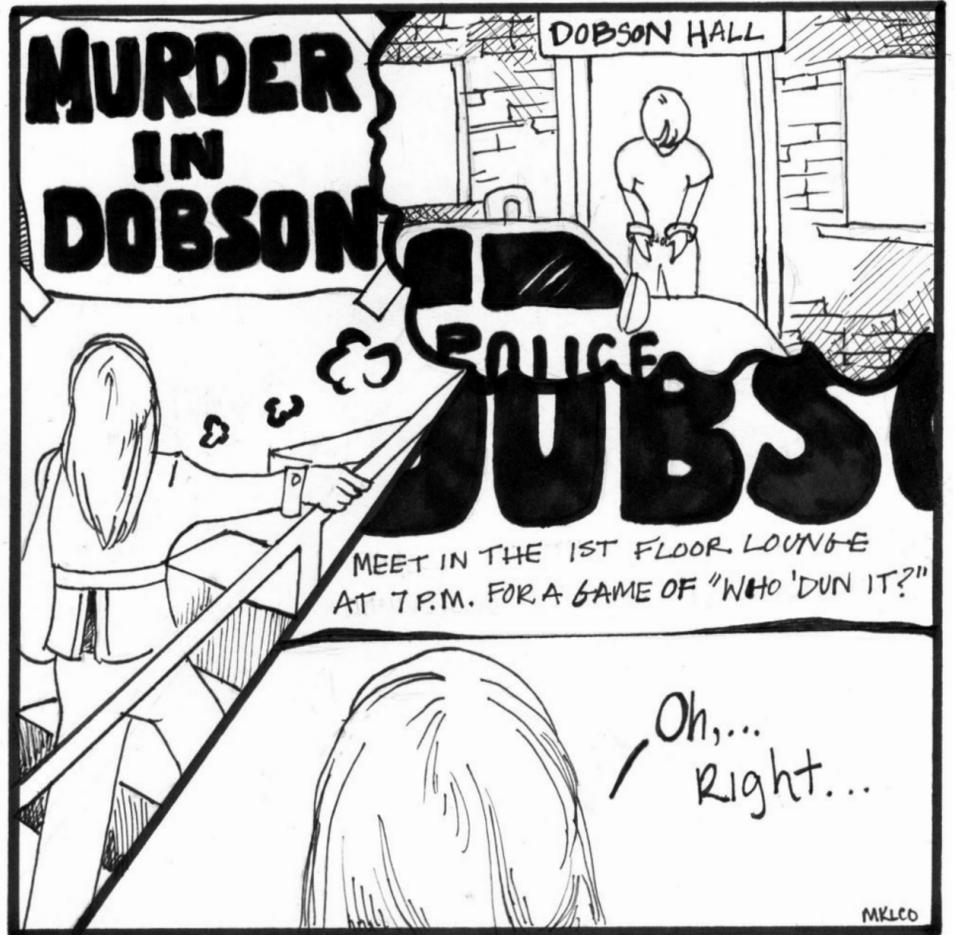
Highway 63 was routed through our fine town way back in 1926. It's up to us to realize that this wasn't a curse, but a blessing. The more we treat it like a poison to be pushed as far from Kirksville as possible, the more likely we are to lose its vital benefits.

Perhaps we will realize only too late that the semi-trucks we loathe to find ourselves behind are, in fact, among the moneymakers for our town. Kicking them to the curb because they slow down our two-mile commutes is shortsighted at best, and at worst, hurts the most vulnerable Kirksville residents right where it counts.

CORRECTIONS

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please e-mail index@truman.edu, call us at 660-785-4449, or send a letter to Index, 1200 Barnett Hall, Truman State University, Kirksville, Mo. 63501.

- A photograph on page 21 of the April 3 issue of the Index incorrectly identified the subject as Jen Lawson. The person in the photograph is Lawson's playing partner from another school.
- A photograph byline on page 10 of the April 3 issue of the Index incorrectly identified the photographer as Brian O'Shaughnessy. The photographer was Krista Goodman.
- A column on page 5 of the April 3 issue of the Index titled "Amount was within allotment guidelines" incompletely attributed the sponsorship of Ward Connerly's speech to the College Libertarians and the College Republicans. In addition to these groups, another major sponsor of the speech was the Leadership Forum.
- An article on page 1 of the April 3 issue of the Index titled "Court hears Asher appeal" was incomplete. The article should have noted that the Missouri Court of Appeals for the Western District convened to hear five cases, but oral arguments only were heard for four cases.



Letters to the Editor

Voting for fee increase is crucial to bringing talent

On the upcoming Student Senate ballot, students will be able to vote whether to raise the Student Activity Fee by \$3.50. Although there has been a lot of debate about whether different organizations on campus have been using their money effectively, this increase would be put toward a specific purpose. The last time the Student Activities Board did a survey, the majority of students wanted money directed toward concerts and comedians, and the last few major comedians SAB brought to campus completely sold out.

Although \$3.50 might seem like a big increase to the fee, \$2.80 would go directly toward making performances on campus bigger and better. SAB has done an excellent job using funds from the past few years to bring well-known bands to Truman, but an increase in rates for stage setup and other costs associated with live performances has limited the acts available. With this increase to the fee, students would have the opportunity to select from a much broader range of artists and comedians and get the shows they want brought to campus.

Even if you haven't agreed with recent funding increases, I encourage everyone to take a look at this increase because it boils down to a small increase per student for a big improvement in performance quality.

Craig Deken
Sophomore

Gonzalez' attitude shows narrow view of diversity

As a former opinions editor at the Index, I feel a comment is in order regarding Jackie Gonzalez' misguided column from the April 3 issue of the Index. In addition to serving as an editor at the Index for two years, I also served for a year on the University's Funds Allotment Council. And after four years at Truman and two in law school, it is clear to me that Gonzalez' attitude represents everything that is wrong about university culture.

To her credit, Gonzalez correctly noted that "FAC should seek to promote a diverse range of events and speakers." Instead of providing funding to Ward Connerly's controversial speech, she suggests the money allocated for Connerly's appearance could be better-used on some sort of pro-environment event. Gonzalez said she would rather give more money to the Student Peace Alliance — a nonpartisan, centrist organization, I'm sure. She complained about offensive, uncomfortable flyers posted around campus that uttered those three evil words: "End affirmative action." And Gonzalez huffed that Connerly's "blatantly conservative event did not

provide development for those in opposition of Connerly's agenda." Really?

Several years ago, Ralph Nader was brought to campus to speak in a sold-out Baldwin Hall. Presumably, Nader's appearance fee was at least \$20,000. Covering the event as the Index's assistant news editor, I had the opportunity to chat informally with him in a conference room before he spoke, along with another half-dozen local reporters. I agree with virtually none of Nader's policies and view him as a political extremist. However, listening to his ideas on consumerism and his opinions on politics was nothing short of compelling. Although my opinions about Nader's political views didn't change, I gained an understanding of where his views came from, as well as a deep respect for a man who clearly was doing what he thought was right. Isn't this what college is about? It is disappointing to hear a college student — especially one with a forum that Gonzalez enjoys — take offense to a speaker's appearance whom she doesn't agree with.

It reminds me of a story told by conservative writer David Horowitz about his visit to a West Coast university. Although Horowitz's speech was co-sponsored by the school's political science department, all but one professor boycotted a pre-speech meet-and-greet and simply refused to interact with Horowitz. And as Horowitz was walking to the hall, he was met by protesters holding signs that said, "No academic freedom for fascists." Unfortunately, this is all too representative of the view taken by many professors and administrators — and promulgated by Gonzalez in her misguided column — that diversity of opinion should be encouraged and discourse should be open ... just as long as you don't disagree with us.

Justin Weinrich
Alumnus

FAC deserves applause for funding Connerly event

According to its mission statement, Truman State University is "committed to the advancement of knowledge, to freedom of thought and inquiry and to the personal, social and intellectual growth of its students." During the last two weeks we have been pleased to see two programs on this campus that exemplify the University's mission. The visit of Ward Connerly on March 27 and the "Read a Book" program featuring Bomani Armah on April 3 provided our campus community with opportunities to gain knowledge, question, clarify positions and develop personal action plans.

Many might find the idea surprising that the Multicultural Affairs Center staff applauds the funding of the Connerly forum, even though we disagree

with the intent of the Missouri Civil Rights Initiative and stand in opposition to Connerly's belief in abolishing all race- and gender-based remedies. The April 3 editorial writers echoed our sentiments: "When a student is confronted with an alternative point of view, she is forced to reflect on her position." Few members of the Truman community knew about the proposed initiative until activist students and groups (supporters representing both sides of the debates) started publicizing the issue. What followed were swirls of e-mails, Facebook groups, clandestine meetings and heated-but-civil debates that animated the Multicultural Affairs Center, classrooms, corridors and dining hall tables. It was exhilarating to witness students discussing ballot initiative language, pondering the differences between affirmative action and race- and gender-based preferences and debating what positions universities, especially highly-selective ones, should take.

The presentation by Armah, an African-American poet with a hip-hop style, best known for the 2007 single "Read a Book," was an excellent complement to Connerly's visit. He also spoke to a packed room. Through the use of multimedia and technology, he highlighted ubiquitous racial stereotyping and explored systemic inequalities that still are prevalent in today's society. Armah offered a compelling critique of many of Connerly's assumptions and viewpoints.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." These two events truly showed where Truman students stand in both of those moments. Of course, there were members of our Truman community who stood on the sidelines, comfortable in silence. We want to commend those students who rose to the challenge and embraced the controversies of these programs. The world can't progress without those individuals who challenge the status quo and stand up for their beliefs. Although we do not always agree with your point of view, we always will support your right to fund it and voice it.

We appreciate the funding that the Funds Allotment Council provided the sponsoring groups to bring to campus unsettling programs that were educational, provoked critical thinking and hopefully stimulated intellectual growth and activism.

Bertha Thomas
Assistant Dean
for Multicultural Affairs
and
Laura Bates
Program Coordinator
for Multicultural Affairs

INDEX

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