

OUR VIEW

Calling primary too soon merits apology

Don't trust the media, and by media, we mean cable news, the morning talk shows, online news sources and even the tried and the true — newspapers.

That's right. Don't trust us. We're human, after all. We try to do the best job possible, don't get us wrong. But once in a while (and too often, if you want the truth), the news media messes up.

On Tuesday night, if you were an observant person, you'd have noticed that a variety of major news media outlets called the Missouri Democratic Primary for Sen. Hillary Clinton. Those outlets are among the most trusted names in news, including the New York Times, Reuters, The Associated Press and even the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. In yesterday morning's USA Today, readers were provided with a full-color map of America with Missouri squarely in the Clinton column (the graphic cited The Associated Press for its source).

The Kansas City Star was a bit more apprehensive, but it certainly didn't seem too confident in its news reporting about Obama. A Hillary victory did seem likely at 10:30 p.m. Tuesday, when she led Obama by about 25,000 votes.

This led major media outlets to call the election for Clinton with about 85 percent of precincts reporting at about 11 p.m. Except they forgot one big thing. The remaining 15 percent of precincts that had not yet reported their votes were in St. Louis City, St. Louis County and Boone County (home of Mizzou and a horde of Obama supporters).

The partial vote tally for those heavily populated areas was overwhelmingly leaning toward Obama, so members of the Index staff crunched the numbers and found that if those areas continued to vote at the same rate for Obama (which they did) then Obama would win the primary by 5,000 to 10,000 votes (which he did).

Not to brag, but if a college student can see the writing on the wall, surely a bureau chief for The Associated Press in Kansas City can do it. This was an avoidable mistake. We're certain of this, considering the same scenario played out in the 2006 Missouri U.S. Senate election. Republican Jim Talent led for most of

the night, but his Democratic opponent, Claire McCaskill, pulled ahead with the victory after — surprise! — Kansas City and St. Louis votes took a while to tally and heavily leaned Democratic.

So why would The Associated Press call an election even when it wasn't nearly over? Why would USA Today sucker us in to read an analysis of Super Tuesday with an incorrect full-color graphical map? Why not just wait until the precincts were reported and be absolutely sure?

Therein lies the most evil and reprehensible thing you'll ever learn about media: We desperately, terribly, obsessively want to be first.

What's so bad about wanting to be first? Well, we get it wrong — and too often.

We want to be the first outlet to tell you that Clinton will win the Missouri Democratic Primary, that the Kennedy endorsement will mean victory for Obama in Massachusetts, that (here's a blast from the past) Al Gore will be the next president of the United States, and that (in an even more distant past) Dewey will defeat Truman in the 1948 election.

Our desperation has driven us to new lows of ineptitude, such that we can't even take the time to look at numbers and do a little math. We're so obsessed with getting the story first that we often overlook the most important part, which is getting the story right.

Of course, (bragging alert) here at the Index we sent out a breaking news story early Wednesday morning reporting the Obama and McCain victories — but only after waiting until 99 percent of precincts had reported and there was no way the outcome would change. Unfortunately, the Index doesn't usually get cited for graphics in USA Today.

The moral of the story is, of course, don't believe everything you read in the paper or see on TV. Ask questions and get involved in the story yourself. Heck, check our facts and call us on it when we're wrong. From the Index Editorial Board, we're sorry that journalism let you down, even if it got corrected (eventually). You deserve better.

CORRECTIONS

- A news brief titled "Youth voter turnout triples in Florida," on page 2 of the Jan. 31 issue of the Index was incorrect. The Missouri primary was scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 5, not Feb. 4.



Letters to the Editor

Super Bowl static shows need for provider change

Like many Truman students, I sat down last Sunday to watch the most-viewed television program of the year: the Super Bowl. Unfortunately for those living on campus, we could not fully enjoy the game due to lackluster reception.

At the start of the game, we had to make our best guess as to where the ball went on any particular play and what the turnout of that play was. As the game progressed, the signal deteriorated, causing many students to leave residence hall Super Bowl parties, which many people worked long and hard preparing. On-campus residents would return to their rooms to find the same FOX static on their TVs.

Could FOX really be broadcasting a fuzzy Super Bowl? But wait! What about off campus? Almost like night and day, the picture off campus was brilliant. Colors, differing hues and ... the ball! You could see the ball! What a miracle. But a miracle it was not. The answer was Cable ONE, Kirksville's major cable provider.

On campus, we are served by Campus TeleVideo. Campus TeleVideo allows its customers to pick and choose what packages they want to offer on campus. So why, then, do we get two ABC affiliates, three from CBS, three from NBC, two C-SPAN channels and only one FOX?

For example, if people are watching their favorite show on channel 7 (NBC-Quincy) and the reception is poor, they can change to channels 8 or 9 (NBC-Kansas City and NBC-St. Louis, respectively). This simple solution would have been possible if we were offered multiple FOX feeds. But the feed from Ottumwa also wasn't the problem.

Both Campus TeleVideo and Cable ONE bring Kirksville and Truman residents KYOU-FOX from Ottumwa. So why is it that the FOX signal on campus was so terrible when off campus it was crystal clear?

Perhaps it is that the Ottumwa feed for campus must go through many more locations via Campus TeleVideo, whereas the Cable ONE feed goes directly from Ottumwa to Kirksville and its subscribers. Truman's cable provider was Cable ONE before September 2006. [Editor's Note: Truman's decision to switch was based on three factors: cost, services offered and the company's references, according to the Sept. 16, 2006 issue of the Index.] Like any business, Truman tries to minimize cost and do what it thinks is in the best interest of its customers. However, once it becomes apparent that such changes are not always for the better, another change must be made.

Either we go back to the good old ways, or we need another gamble. Personally, I'd like to see Cable ONE as our cable television provider on campus again. Join me in enacting this change by contacting ResLife and working to see what can be done. I guess the silver lining is that the Super Bowl will be broadcast on NBC next year, giving on-campus viewers three channels to choose from and John Madden as our commentator.

Aaron Sparks
Senior

Smoking ban should be an issue of property rights

Usually it's non-smokers who are in support of the smoking ban and smokers who are against it. Non-smokers don't like having to deal with smoky restaurants, and smokers don't like having to go outside in the cold to have a cigarette. So when I hear Phil Jarrett chiming in, it's a breath of fresh air to hear a smoker who is in favor of taking away the rights of property owners — I mean, in favor of the smoking ban.

If you think that's something, I'll do Jarrett one better. I'm a non-smoker who is against the smoking ban. I don't like being around smoke

any more than the next non-smoker, but you see, unlike Jarrett, I don't base my decision on the fact that the smell of tobacco is obnoxious, that it's bad for the smoker or even that secondhand smoke can hurt or kill other people. I also don't base my decision on the fact that it's inconvenient for smokers, discriminates against them or even that it hurts local businesses.

The problem with Jarrett's decision to support the smoking ban, as selfless as it might seem at first, is that he ignores the only issue that should matter. He touched on it when he talked about how you wouldn't smoke in someone's home without asking. Despite how much we've come to ignore property rights lately with eminent domain and smoking bans, a person's business is his property and no one else's.

He owns it just as he owns his home and should be able to invite smokers and non-smokers as he chooses. If he wants to let people smoke in his bar or restaurant, he should have just as much right to do so as he has to let people smoke in his home. At the same time, he has every right to require that people don't smoke in his business, just like he can in his home.

If a customer doesn't like a restaurant's policy to allow smoking, he could decide to stop going or even protest. If this happened enough, it would be in the restaurant owner's best interest to change his policy and not allow smoking in his establishment. At the same time, I would be all for banning smoking in public buildings and public places.

I would even support a move to ban all smoking on campus — not just inside the buildings but on the sidewalks, too. Why the contrast between my positions on smoking bans in public places and private establishments?

It's because like all Libertarians, I think that people should have a right to do what they want with their own property but that public property is owned by everyone and everyone should have equal rights to enjoy that common property. Next time the debate is brought up, don't think about how inconvenient it is or even about secondhand smoke. Think instead about property rights, because when the government starts restricting the rights of business owners, I always wonder who's next.

Justin Logan
Sophomore
College Libertarians

Focus of primaries needs to be issues, not panache

I was very heartened to read the columns by Phil Jarrett and Andrew Kindiger in the first few issues of this semester's Index. They both give us a good, factual, bountiful harvest of reflections about candidates for the U.S. presidential primaries and caucuses.

But herein lies the rub that neither columnist dwells on as they should, namely that we all as educated people should rightly insist that the media process of selection for debates should be rational and issue-centered. At least Paul is permitted to participate in the debates, which allows him to attain a so-called loser vote almost as high-placed as the Big Apple toughie Rudy Giuliani. As the third party candidate, Ralph Nader, showed in both of his last two presidential runs, if you are not in the debates (like Paul) then all this vaunted U.S. democracy is dumbed down and is nothing like the real choices we have abroad.

In Canada, minor parties such as the Socialist New Democrats and the centrist Liberal Democrats moan about too little coverage, but they still are able to have their issues aired, printed and forced into the major frontrunners' debate. This, despite the fact that Canada has been forced into the two-party, American-style, non-proportional vote allocation system

that Europe wisely has eschewed!

Additionally, why are Jarrett and Kindiger not polemicising more about the near-total exclusion of not only third parties like the Green Party and the U.S. Socialist Party, but also of mainstream party candidates like Paul and Kucinich? Both currently are being marginalized by their own parties to C-SPAN and the wee hours of TV coverage. Indeed, Kucinich's excellent English wife, who just happens to be physically taller than him, gets more TV and media coverage than he does!

And it's not that Kucinich is perfect either: He admits that he "bypassed" Iowa this time (as Nader did to many states in his last effort). But it ought to bother you that even with your unelected, unregulated Federal Election Commission of stuffed, corporate shirts, your so-called "issue candidates" would be only mildly leftist in my country, Britain, or many countries in Europe and the Americas for that matter. It isn't just a lack of big money, either, as in the case of the elite, largely — but not always — wealthy supporters of Hillary Clinton (who never want real change).

If you prefer real change and real issues, you'd find that it's necessary to give those issues parity in media time.

Larry Iles
Kirksville resident

Connection between town, University deserve support

Anyone who ever doubted how much Kirksville matters to the Truman community need only look to last week's Art and Science presentation on the future of enrollment at Truman. The study was a wake-up call in many ways, but for me it underscored the importance of working together to help make Kirksville a better place.

One big step we can take right now is to reject the "town versus gown" attitude I sometimes hear from both longtime residents and Truman students. This wrong thinking denies the fact that, right here and right now, we are all townies.

Faculty and staff may work at the University, but it's a job like any other. Outside Truman's walls we are living in the same neighborhoods, worshipping at the same churches, sending our children to the same schools and devoting our time to the same causes. Many have lived in the Kirksville area for generations and will remain for generations to come.

For students, the study made it clear that the quality and cost of their education are tied to perceptions of this city. But also remember: After you've graduated, most of you will have spent almost a quarter of your life living, working and playing in Kirksville. I've always found it amusing to watch student attitudes toward our city evolve from freshman year to senior year. The number of former Truman and ATSU students who decide to stick around or return to carve out a home is formidable. I am one of them.

Personally, I think Kirksville's geographical location is one of its biggest strengths. While the rest of the country is commuting to and from work and bouncing between urban and suburban lifestyles, we all live, work and relax together in the same place. This strong sense of community is our greatest asset. Let's not undermine it by putting down the town and its people — you're only putting down yourself.

Instead, let's reach out by taking an interest in local issues, getting involved through local organizations and the Serve Center and inviting others to activities here on campus.

Our destinies are intertwined.

Todd Kuhns
University Webmaster
and City Council candidate

INDEX

Serving the University community since 1909

Staff

Managing Editor Jessie Gasch	Editor in Chief Nathan Becker	News Editor Julie Williams
Sports Editor Joe Barker	Features Editor Jessica Rapp	Assistant News Editors Chris Boning Diane Poelker
Assistant Sports Editor Blake Toppmeyer	Assistant Features Editor Alex Boles	News Staff Renee Cella Caitlin Dean Jean Kaul Charlotte Keenan Becka Mayfield John Moenster Kelly Schute Heather Turner
Sports Staff Brent Foster Arron Husted Jack Nicholl Ben Yarnell	Features Staff Harry Burson Franklin Cline Mark Couch Ryan Dalton Stephanie Hall Julia Hansen Dylan Herx Lauren Miller Laura Prather Jonathan Stutte Kanna Taylor	Copy Chief and Cartoonist Megan Klco
Photo Editor Mark Hardy	Design Chief Nick Wilsey	Copy Editors Bradley Bartlett Matt Butler Jennifer Calandra Sara DeGonia Amanda Jackson Kelsey Landhuis Zoe Martin Kelly Schute
Assistant Photo Editor Brian O'Shaughnessy	Designers Andrea Bailey Avishkek Banskota Antionette Bedessie Leah Bowring	
Photographers Mayank Dhungana Erin Lee Givarz Krista Goodman Blake Peterson Beth Rolf		
Opinions Editor and Online Editor Daniel Glossenger		
Business Manager Chris Vernaci	Advertising Manager Ashley Hancock	Circulation Manager Justin Dildine
Assistant Advertising Manager Adam Arredondo	Advertising Designers Kelley Hulse Tina May	Distribution Aaron Ely Kyle Oesch
	Adviser Don Krause	

Letters Policy

The Index welcomes letters to the editor from the University community. Letters to the editor are due by noon the Monday before publication and become property of the Index. Submissions are subject to editing, must contain a well-developed theme and cannot exceed 500 words except at the discretion of the Editorial Board. All letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced, signed by at least one individual and include a phone number for verification. The Index does not publish anonymous letters to the editor. Letters to the editor also may be submitted by e-mail at index@truman.edu or on our Web site at www.trumanindex.com. Include the words "letter to the editor" in the subject line of the e-mail. No individual may submit more than one letter a week.

Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The first copy is free, additional copies cost 50 cents each. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the editor in chief, managing editor, news editor, copy chief and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

Advertising Policy

For up-to-date information on current rates or to inquire about the availability of classified ads in the Index, contact our advertising department at 660-785-4319. Our fax number is 660-785-7601, or you can e-mail us at indexads@truman.edu.