# Should penalized states be allowed to re-vote?

ONE-ON-ONE

## Fairness means new primaries

**Nathan Atkinson**

It was decided that delegates from Florida and Michigan will not have a say at the Democratic National Convention. Their votes will not count in deciding who the Democratic candidate is for the November election.

These two states, which account for roughly 10 percent of the United States' population, will not have their state delegates counted because their state Democratic parties defied the Democratic National Committee and scheduled their primaries before Feb. 1, 2008.

Should people's votes not count simply because the state party rescheduled a primary?

Just because the state parties broke a rule does not mean that the voters of two major states should be disenfranchised. The primary system is not government-run and is not subject to the same standards as general elections. The parties run the primaries, and they should get to choose whom their candidates are.

I am not arguing that the Democratic National Committee does not technically have a right to forbid delegates from being seated at convention — after all, the entire process is a party affair — but I am arguing that it is morally wrong that the Democrats in Michigan and Florida do not have a say choosing their party's nominee.

The primary system already has enough flaws. Most states schedule their primaries too late and therefore give up their say, although not this year. In defense of the state Democratic parties of Michigan and Florida, they simply were trying to make their votes matter, but now they are not going to count at all.

They called the Democratic National Committee's bluff, and they lost.

Individual Democrats in Michigan and Florida who either voted in or would have voted in their primaries should not have something so important taken away because of the actions of state party officials.

There should be another set of primaries in these states on the last primary day, June 3, with Montana and South Dakota. Conducting these primaries on the last possible day would serve two purposes. It would give the states enough time to prepare for the primaries, and it still would put them dead last in the order of primaries. Having their primaries last could serve as a kind of commuted punishment. Michigan and Florida disobeyed the Democratic National Committee, and as a consequence, their primaries will take place on the last day, but their delegates will be seated.

Counting the delegates from the previous primary election is not an option. Not everyone was on the ballot, and no one really campaigned in Michigan or Florida — under the premise that their delegates would not be seated anyway.

I don't know how feasible it is to redo the primaries of two large states, but I do think we ought to try.

The states' parties broke the rules, and there should be some consequences for doing so, but ignoring millions of votes in an important election year is not the answer.

*Nathan Atkinson is a senior political science major from Glasgow, Mo.*

## No re-votes for sake of equality

**Daniel Glossenger**

Rules are meant to be broken, but once they're broken, the penalties should stay the same.

This is especially true for Michigan and Florida. The voters there knew they weren't casting their ballots for a voting delegate at the Democratic National Convention. They knew their ballots were bogus.

But instead of accepting their fate, the big question — now that they want a voice — is how they can conduct another vote. Surprise, surprise.

In Florida, the state Democratic Party chairwoman, Karen Thurman, has said virtually every plan for another vote in her state has been shot down or isn't viable. She also said she solicited the input of thousands of Floridians, and, interestingly enough, they don't want to vote again. It doesn't look likely that a re-vote will happen in the Sunshine State.

But in Michigan, negotiations are underway to produce a plan for a primary that would happen June 3. In the plan, the national Democratic Party would reimburse the state for the cost of running the primary, according to CNN.com. The Michigan legislature might take up the issue this week, but until then it's wait-and-see as to what they come up with.

But all this hullabaloo begs the question — why should Michigan and Florida be allowed to get back their delegates at all?

The Rules and Bylaws Committee of the Democratic Party stripped Michigan and Florida of their delegates to the national convention as a penalty for holding their primaries early. This should remain the case, whether re-votes happen or not.

The point of removing the delegates' voting power was that the states would not have a say in selecting the presidential nominee. By allowing the states to re-vote, we wipe the slate clean of their early votes and pretend like they never happened. But it did happen, and if Michigan receives DNC funds to hold its primary, I want to know why Missouri isn't getting any.

To put it another way, Missouri followed the rules, we had a fair election, and we voted peacefully. But the DNC won't pay for our primary because we didn't put the entire nomination process between a rock and a hard place like Michigan and Florida.

Another problem with allowing re-votes and seating new delegates is that it makes Michigan and Florida even more important than they would have been had we simply let them vote early.

By letting these states have the last primaries, we end up putting them in the position of kingmaker for the Democrats. Both Obama and Clinton will grovel at the feet of Michiganders and Floridians when the candidates should be ignoring their pleas for attention.

But as so many people say, this story is about equal representation and disenfranchisement. Yet if Missouri had had an unfair election, I wouldn't want our votes to count. Equal representation should only happen when there are equal standards among the states that are represented. A penalty should be imposed on those who don't play by the rules, or else what reason is there to have rules at all?

Disenfranchisement, by the way, happens when someone's right to vote is revoked — and guess what? Your vote shouldn't count if your election isn't fair, and you shouldn't be allowed to rig up a quick fix in the middle of the game just because you admit that your election wasn't fair.

Playing fast and loose with the rules isn't a good way to run a nomination process, and by letting Michigan and Florida re-vote, we only reward the miscreants among us. If the good people of those states feel disenfranchised, they need to vote out the good people that they dutifully elected to their legislatures who caused the problem for them in the first place.

Finally, if I had to choose between the Democrats losing Michigan and Florida in the national election versus losing self-respect and dignity by seating their delegates, I'd rather take the high road: Lose the 2008 presidential election, wait for the Republicans to foul up the system a little more, then win in 2012 and retain a sense of fair play.

*Daniel Glossenger is a senior history major from Nashville, Tenn.*

# Helping victims of assault raises awareness like no project ever could

**Kelsey Landhuis**

There is a scene in "The Matrix" in which the film's hero, Neo, undergoes a training program to learn to pay constant attention to his surroundings. Neo's mentor gives him advice as they walk through the city, and Neo hangs on every word. That is, until he gets distracted by a woman in a red dress. Who can blame him? In the sea of ordinary people, her bright clothing is the only thing that stands out.

However, a red dress is not always guaranteed to attract attention. For example, the Women's Resource Center's Red Dress Project, which is designed to raise awareness of sexual violence toward women, has been going on for the past week, but this might be the first you have heard of it. That's OK, though. Just like most people wouldn't fault Neo for being distracted by the woman in the red dress, few would fault you for failing to take note of the Red Dress Project, which essentially consists of tables covered with pamphlets about sexual assault set up at various locations across campus.

At Truman, hardly a day goes by when someone is not trying to raise awareness about some cause, whether it is breast cancer, heart disease or concentrated animal feeding operations. Students' passion about these issues demonstrates a strong sense of moral and social responsibility, but amid the general enthusiasm it is easy for an individual cause to get lost. Sexual violence toward women should not be one of these forgotten causes, and both men and women can do their part to ensure that it is not.

According to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network's Web site, one in six women have been victims of rape or attempted rape. In other words, this is not some abstract problem floating in the world somewhere outside the University walls. Chances are good that you know someone who has been the victim of some type of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault.

For women, there are ways to decrease your risk. You, like Neo, always should be aware of your surroundings. As a further precaution, the University offers a health class called Rape Aggression Defense for Women, which teaches practical self-defense skills. After taking this class and seeing a demonstration in which a well-placed shot of pepper spray knocked a public safety officer out of commission for at least 10 minutes, I would highly recommend the spray as an effective repellent to potential attackers.

Unfortunately, sexual violence still occurs even with these precautions. For the men and women who are friends of victims and potential victims, there are ways to prevent attacks as well as offer support. Sexual assault has devastating physical and psychological effects. If you know someone who has been a victim, you should be there to listen and encourage counseling. The University offers several resources in this regard, including the WRC and University Counseling Services. You also should encourage friends and loved ones who have undergone this type of experience to report the crime. According to the RAINN Web site, 61 percent of rapes and sexual assaults are not reported to the police. Helping victims conquer their fear and speak out about their experiences will raise awareness of sexual violence in a way that no red dress ever could.

*Kelsey Landhuis is a junior English and French major from Cedar Rapids, Iowa*

AROUND THE QUAD

### Should Michigan and Florida be allowed to re-vote?

**Becca Pace**
Senior

**"Stripping the delegates just penalizes the people when it's the states' fault, so they should be allowed to vote again."**

**Colin Ellis**
Senior

**"Honestly I haven't been keeping up with anything in the news so I have no idea."**

**Brenna Race**
Junior

**"Yes, because I don't see a point to them not being allowed to re-vote."**

# Medical database invades privacy to spy on citizenry

**Phil Jarrett**

Fashion tips from the Missouri Legislature: Blue people in white pants are out. Yes, the days of 'smurfing' are over.

Probably one of the stranger manifestations of legal jargon, 'smurfing' has nothing to do with "The Smurfs" cartoon.

Rather it's a reference to the purchasing of restricted pharmaceutical controlled substances such as pseudoephedrine at various grocery stores and pharmacies in order to vend the drugs or use them to create illicit concoctions such as methamphetamine. The end result of "smurfing" usually is something even more trippy than watching "The Smurfs."

In an attempt to squash 'smurfing,' the Missouri Senate is trying to create the Gargamel, sworn enemy of the Smurfs, of prescription drug abuse. Bill 732 would establish a drug-monitoring program in the Department of Health and Senior Services that would "monitor the prescribing and dispensing of all ... controlled substances by all licensed professionals, with certain exceptions, who prescribe or dispense these substances in Missouri." The pharmacist or clerk must then "electronically submit to the department information for each prescription or dispensing."

Basically, when Missourians buy certain pharmaceuticals, their name, telephone number and address are submitted to a database and collected in order to assure that they do not go out and buy the same stuff elsewhere. The bill assures, with a few exceptions, "all submitted prescription information shall be confidential."

The act authorizes the "release of non-personal, general information for statistical, educational, and research purposes." I suppose that makes a certain amount of sense. However, the department "may contract with other state agencies or private vendors to implement the provisions of this act."

This is where I started to feel a bit uneasy because I don't have any real guarantee about who is going to be peeking at my medical information.

I am not alone in this sentiment. The bill narrowly passed in the House, with several lawmakers raising concerns about privacy and government invasion of medical privacy. Rep. Rob Schaaf tacked on an amendment restricting access to this information and increasing penalties for unauthorized use of it.

Although amendments such as these are reassuring, they raise the question: Are we doing more harm than good with this bill? Schaaf, who also is a physician, seemed to think not.

"In my mind, the loss of the confidentiality of your data exceeds the benefit that the state will get from fighting meth with this bill," Schaaf told The Kansas City Star.

I have always been a vocal opponent of conspiracy theories and slippery-slope arguments, but I do have to wonder about future legislative tweaking and the consequences of personal medical information making its way to entities other than the state. Many of the drugs to be tracked are potentially embarrassing because they are used for treating psychological ailments, the kind of thing most people prefer to keep to themselves. Even more troubling, if insurance providers were allowed to see drug-purchasing history, patients could be denied coverage. But these are conjectures, and I must submit that this oversight probably would curb prescription abuse in the short term.

All Orwellian fears of surveillance aside, my primary objection to the creation of this database is that it will cost a considerable amount of my tax dollars and will be used to toss more individuals into an already crowded jail system. The bill summary includes flowery language about the department working with other associations to "ensure ongoing monitoring and treatment and encourage individual patients who are addicted to substances monitored by the program to receive addiction treatment."

Take a look at the current drug laws in this state and this country at large and it is overwhelmingly obvious that the priority rarely is to rehabilitate, but rather to rid society of individuals we would rather not deal with.

It is time for a mentality shift, to move from this culture of surveillance and criminal quarantine into a more holistic approach that respects the privacy of citizens and seeks to cure, not condemn those afflicted with drug addiction.

*Phil Jarrett is a senior philosophy and religion and communication major from Chesterfield, Mo.*