

OUR VIEW

HB 1775 will resolve traffic law loopholes

Hot pursuits don't often happen on campus, but it's certainly time to give the police the sanction to conduct them.

Of course, that's not the whole story, but in the short and sweet of it, Missouri House Bill 1775 adds "college or university police officers" to the list of law enforcement personnel in Missouri who are allowed to arrest or ticket lawbreakers.

To be more specific, it'll help to understand what the law says now, and then it'll make more sense why the law needs some patching.

For example, if a Truman Department of Public Safety officer saw you spray paint a building, break a window or give someone the smack-down, the officer is perfectly in line to arrest you or ticket you. Just like anywhere else, that would go on your criminal record.

But say you made a moving violation on campus (i.e., you drove the wrong way down a one-way on campus property). Then the officer can ticket you only on campus property. But he or she is not explicitly allowed to continue the pursuit onto city streets (or anywhere else besides University property).

Something important to keep in mind is that HB 1775 only applies to moving violations. That means a parking ticket for leaving your green-decal Dodge Neon in a spot for a red-decal Lincoln Town Car won't go on your record and won't give you points on your insurance. But if you committed a DUI in your little Neon and DPS officers pursued you first on campus and then arrested you off-campus, you would still get points (and jail time, hopefully).

This is absolutely, 100 percent the right thing to do. It's taken far too

long for it to happen, too.

In effect, it sets the record straight about university police, and we think it lays to rest some misconceptions about them.

First, it buries the notion that DPS doesn't have real authority. Pretty much every law enforcement agency in the book is already included in this statute, including Missouri Capitol Police, state park rangers, water patrol agents, conservation agents

and so on. Clearly, if a water patrol agent is empowered to leave his jurisdiction to ticket you for speeding, the trained and respectable agents of the Department of Public Safety should be able to do so.

Second, HB 1775 closes any loophole that permits offenders to go unpunished. We want our campus secure, and this measure supports that goal. In other words, the long arm of the law needs a helping hand from the legislature to do its job, and HB 1775 is that helping hand.

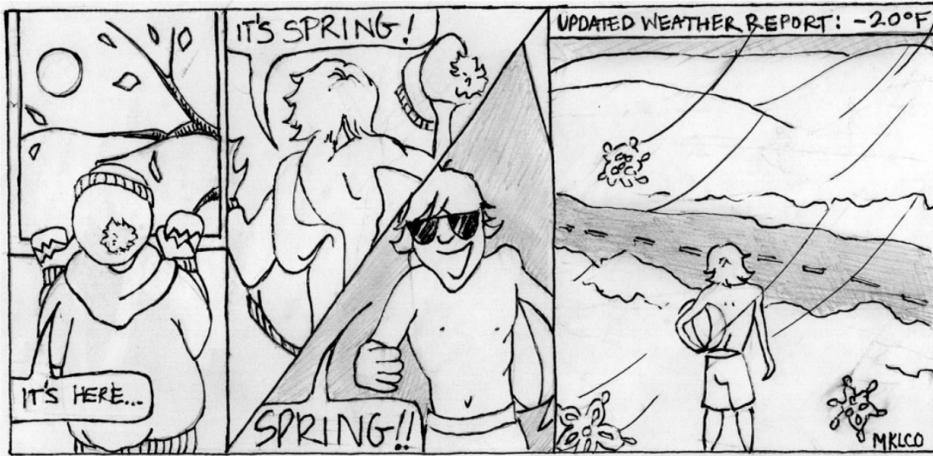
Finally, we understand the fear that university police might ticket folks for things that seem minor and that these things will show up on a criminal record. But here's the deal — moving violations that happen on-campus will be treated exactly the same as if they had happened off-campus.

That doesn't mean DPS will be cracking skulls. It means equality. To put it another way, if you have ever received a ticket for a moving violation from a Kirksville police officer, do you think that if someone else committed the same violation (but did it on campus and then left University property in a hurry), the person should be let off the hook? Didn't think so. We support this bill, its authors and its mission, and so should you. It's time for HB 1775 to get moving.

We understand the fear that University police might ticket folks for things that seem minor.

CORRECTIONS

- A graphic on page 19 of the Feb. 28 issue of the Index was incorrect. Nick Certa is ranked second on his team for 2007-08 in rebounds, but is ranked first in blocks.



Letters to the Editor

Volleyball coach's open letter to administration about athletics:

I would like to ask the administrators reading this letter to put themselves in the shoes of coaches, faculty, staff and athletes when thinking about policies and procedures that affect student athletes. If you had to deal with the following situations, I wonder if things still would be the way they are now, or if they would be different.

Attendance Policy

Imagine your daughter plays volleyball, and her team makes the playoffs. She missed three classes for regular season matches and now one for the playoffs. Would you be able to tolerate a professor dropping her grade from an A to a B because she will end up missing four classes (class policy)? I would like someone to respond to this. Would you be fine with having to take leave without pay for some conferences and committee meetings?

Offices

If you had to use our offices, would the temperatures still be in the 50s in the winter and scorching heat in the summer when you sweat typing on your computer? Would you be able to tolerate your computer shutting off because the circuits overloaded from all of the floor heaters in the building?

Gym Quality

Would the Pershing flooring still seem adequate if you coached and your players incurred shin splints after jumping 15 times for three straight days? Would you be fine with leaves everywhere on the floor before practice?

At the Gym All Day and All Night

If you coached a team, would you be fine with consistently working in the evenings and missing family time? Would you get up and blow snow off the track before anybody else wakes up but still be there until about 7 p.m. — then repeat the cycle? If your son was on the football team, would you be fine with it not getting practice times except for 10:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.? Don't forget, you still have to teach or perform some other duty and find time to recruit and fundraise.

Lack of Practice

If you coached, would you be fine with practices being canceled for a concert, organization pictures, another sporting team's home game, etc? These add up. These organizations want (and deserve) space as well. Can you win without practicing?

Priority Enrollment

If you coached, would you think that priority enrollment is not showing favoritism but helping these students out so they can balance both the jobs you hired them for? You are paying them to excel academically and athletically. A good night's rest is needed.

Academic Classes at the Rec

If you coached, would you then think that moving academic classes to the Student Recreation Center would be a good idea? We could start practicing earlier than 2:30 p.m. in Pershing.

Kirk Building and School Gyms

If you knew that Truman owns two more gyms that are being used for storage, would you wonder why it has not made an effort to refurbish them to help lessen the burden on Pershing Arena? This would help other student organizations secure space as well.

This list is small, but what you can see is that there is a culture at Truman to do the bare minimum with athletics. My perception is that athletics are not a priority. My players travel during the week and miss classes. They usually have to make up homework and tests before they leave. We often arrive at 12 a.m. to 2 a.m. They will wake up to go to the other classes, practice and then leave the next 1-2 days for more matches. If we make the playoffs and travel to the conference tournament, regional championships or the Elite 8, then they could miss as many as 10 more days of classes. It is your responsibility to help them manage this exciting time. It is difficult enough.

I am always told money is tight and the state significantly lowered spending more than eight years ago. True. However, since that time, Truman

has had buildings built and others remodeled. What does this mean? Truman plans appropriately for areas it considers significant priorities.

These concerns have not recently surfaced. They have been around for a long time, which means there have been plenty of opportunities to remedy the situation. "Excellence is no accident." I can guarantee you that if you, the administrators, put the same effort into your athletic programs, you would see the same results which have occurred everywhere else on this campus.

Jason Skoch
Head Volleyball Coach

Athletes need to accept increased responsibility for missing classes

The Our View in the Feb. 28 issue of the Index concerning class attendance policies is a bit unrealistic, especially considering that it is an enforced University policy that absences due to University programs (per the Editorial Board's focus on athletic absences) cannot be penalized [see Editor's Note]. As someone who has attended Truman for years, currently teaches as a Graduate Teaching Research Assistant and has conferred with dozens of my colleagues on their teaching practices, I honestly cannot think of a single instructor who would not work with students dealing with legitimate absences or other exceptional circumstances within reason (use common sense to define legitimate absences and within reason).

Usually all that is required is contacting the teacher directly and discussing the situation, preferably ahead of time if it is at all possible. It isn't always possible to directly make up missed in-class work, but professors can and do work with students and give alternate assignments.

Despite the insinuations of the Our View, I don't think teachers have forgotten what it means to be a living human being in the world of academia. We do know what it's like to juggle schedules, have to attend funerals, end up too ill to come to class or have other issues arise.

However, there's only so much leniency, ethically and professionally, available to a teacher without making the class a mockery of the course goals and expectations. After all, this is Truman, not print-a-diploma.com. Students who cannot fulfill the basic obligations of a course, in this case attendance, have options beyond accusing the professor's policy of "[taking] out frustration with ... non-academic scholarships" — drop, withdraw, take the class pass/fail, take an incomplete, apply for a leave and more.

Ultimately, it is up to the student to handle this dilemma maturely, not some bureaucratic board specifically designated for approving attendance policies as the authors suggest (syllabi containing attendance policies already have to be approved by the department — any significant problems such as discriminatory policies would have been addressed before the term starts). If the class is important enough to the student, the student will take the time and effort to contact the professor and work out the particulars.

Athletes and those working on other outside projects chose to be involved and need to accept the increased responsibility and the consequences of prioritizing one obligation over another.

It's not easy, and isn't always fair, but that's life.

Tamara Sack
English GTRA

Editor's Note:

Per Faculty Senate Bill #4401, approved Aug. 29, 2002, and effective Spring 2003, "University faculty are encouraged, whenever possible, to accommodate students who must miss class for important reasons," yet the University "entrusts the faculty with the responsibility of determining how absences will affect student grades." Also, "only the instructor can excuse missed classes or assignments."

Rodgerson's agenda doesn't represent people's best interest

A pastor must know that lying is a sin, right? So what I don't understand is why Aaron Rodgerson said he doesn't have an agenda. Because he obviously does. In the article in the Feb. 28 issue of the Index titled "City denies liquor license," Mr. Rodgerson said, "... Really I didn't have an agenda, and to this day I don't have an agenda," after he was the only councilmember to vote no to granting a license to the new club.

He then said, "When you've got good men that know God in government, not that you're going to please everyone, but I think you're going to have a lot better decisions. I think you're going to have a lot more right decisions. So I was just a voice for what's right." Oh, I get it. Mr. Rodgerson is a man who knows God, so he's the end-all, be-all of good and evil, yes and no, right and wrong. And as a result, he's doing us all a favor by voting not to grant liquor licenses.

Councilmembers are chosen to represent the people. That means sometimes, they need to put their own thoughts and values on the back burner and listen to what the voices of the town have to say. And yes, that goes beyond the church.

Granted, I haven't been in Kirksville since May of last year, but I highly doubt there is a plurality of people picketing for prohibition. I thought it might be good for the mischievous entity known as Kirksville City Council to have a preacher on board. Typically, leaders of congregations are looked upon by the masses as a source of advice and reason. Yet once again, I quote from the article: "Rodgerson said to get rid of liquor would boost the economy." I guess advice and reason don't apply to all preachers.

Ross Houston
Alumnus

Fee is justified to encourage responsibility in course choices

In a column in the Feb. 28 issue of the Index, the argument was made that the date for the \$50 add-drop fee should either be pushed back a week or completely dropped. Although I agree that a \$50 fee for deciding a class is either too difficult or not of interest is excessive, I do not think it should be done away with altogether. I face great difficulty each semester in enrolling in classes that will fill necessary requirements. Without overrides — which few professors are willing to give due to already enlarged class sizes — getting into a class is nearly impossible.

Course schedules are posted well in advance, even if they are listed as "view only." This gives students the opportunity to contact the professor of a particular class and discuss the potential expectations of a class before enrolling in the class. Rather than enrolling in a class you know little about and potentially taking the spot of someone who truly needs it, why not take a little initiative and responsibility and find out before enrollment whether you think the class is something you are capable of and willing to complete?

Heather King
Junior

Political telephone calls make for nuisance to the disabled

I would like to comment about the nuisance of political phone calls. I am wheelchair-bound, and answering the phone takes some effort. I received two recorded political phone calls each day for more than a week before the Missouri primary.

I am a subscriber to the Do Not Call list. There will be more political elections and primaries yet to come this year, and my opinion is that these political phone calls should be stopped for those who do not want them. Privacy is being invaded.

Charles L. Moore
Kirksville resident

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Editorial Policy

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