

Blunt seeks new legislation

Governor supports harsh punishment for predators

BY MARGARET HOOPER
Staff Reporter

Gov. Matt Blunt stopped in Kirksville on Monday to request support for legislation that would give prosecutors the option to seek the death penalty in certain child rape cases.

Currently, Missouri only allows capital punishment for murder under aggravated circumstances, such as multiple offenses, murder of a police officer or murder for hire, according to Missouri Statute MIA-CR 3rd 314.40. Blunt is asking Missouri's elected representatives to propose legislation to include the death penalty as an option for prosecutors "in cases of forcible rape and forcible sodomy when the victim is younger than 12 years old," according to an April 28 press release.

Missouri has one of the nation's toughest versions of Jessica's Law, which gives prosecutors the option to pursue a life sentence, with a minimum of 30 years, for "serious sexual crimes committed against young children" and requires certain sex offenders to be monitored for life, according to the press release.

Blunt's initiative follows the April 16 U.S. Supreme Court decision on Kentucky's lethal injection process. The Court decided seven to two in favor of the state, ruling that execution by lethal injection is not unconstitutional. Missouri placed a moratorium on the death penalty, pending the Court's decision, which was lifted after the ruling was handed down.

"Two weeks ago, the

United States Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of lethal injection and cleared the way for states to resume the administration of the ultimate punishment for violent and dangerous crimes," Blunt said.

The same day of the ruling, Blunt called on the Missouri Supreme Court to set execution dates for convicts on Missouri's death row. Marlin Gray was the last person put to death in Missouri — he was executed by lethal injection Oct. 26, 2005.

Now Blunt is seeking the death penalty option in child rape cases. Louisiana, Montana, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas currently allow capital punishment for "a violent offender convicted of child rape," and Alabama, Colorado, Mississippi and Tennessee are considering similar legislation, according to the press release.

Blunt said violent sex crimes against children are almost the worst offense a criminal could commit, second only to first-degree murder.

"These evil predators have robbed these children of their youth and innocence, and they deserve the most serious punishment we can possibly deliver, both as a matter of justice and as a matter of deterrence," Blunt said.

Blunt said he is not seeking a mandatory death penalty, but rather, the opportunity for prosecutors to pursue it for heinous circumstances. He said such a law would make Missouri safer, give prosecutors the freedom to pursue complete justice and deter potential offenders.

Blunt said he would like to see the legislature pass a law this session but



Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index
Matt Blunt, Missouri Governor, speaks at City Hall on Monday. Blunt is a proponent of new legislation that seeks stricter punishment in child rape cases.

fears what might happen if it does not.

"If we do not pass it this year, there will be another crime that is horrendous in nature, and we will all wonder why the death penalty is not available as a punishment," Blunt said.

Drawing the line between what deserves the death penalty and what does not can be difficult.

Freshman Erin Wiemelt said she does not think the death penalty is warranted in any situation.

"I don't think that we should kill other people just because they kill people," Wiemelt said. "That's wrong to kill people, so that's not really solving anything."

Although Adair County Prosecutor Mark Williams declined to give his stance

on the death penalty, he said it is a difficult issue and that deciding to pursue capital punishment is not an easy decision.

"Most murders are going to be a heinous crime — somebody died — but you have to look at all the facts surrounding the case to see how violent the situation was if you're going to ask for another life to be taken," Williams said.

Williams pursued the death penalty in the James McFarland case until McFarland waived his right to a jury, in which case Missouri law does not allow capital punishment. Williams said this is a check built into the judicial system.

"There are safeguards in the system in the sense that I can decide on my

own to seek the death penalty, but you have to convince a jury of 12 that that is the proper punishment," Williams said.

Although the death penalty currently only can be sought for first-degree murder, Blunt's proposal would allow a criminal to be sentenced to death without having taken a life.

Williams said that if the legislature decides to follow the governor's request, it has the difficult task of defining what kinds of cases deserve the death penalty.

"Naturally, every one of them is heinous, it's just, does it deserve the death penalty?" he said. "That's where I think the legislature's going to have a tough time drafting that statute, if that's what they're going to do."

Athletics attempts to promote spirit

BY COREY JAROS
for the Index

It is time for Bulldog fans to get fired up.

Assistant Athletic Director Linda Anderson is heading an effort to increase local interest in Truman athletics by making the events more exciting and interactive for the fans.

"Our two goals are to enhance the atmosphere at athletic events by doing more promotional contests during halftime and time-outs and to put together a spirit club that is going to attend as many of the games as possible and help the rest of the crowd have fun and take advantage of the promotions and sponsorships," Anderson said.

Anderson has had weekly meetings with junior volleyball player Dana Hanselmann and junior football player Andy Swedenhjelm for the last month about potential strategies for a sports marketing campaign. The biggest problem that the group has identified so far is the lack of awareness about the variety of competitive sports at Truman and the action taking place at the Div. II level.

"We are trying to get everybody interested in the games, if not for only the athletics, then at least to have some fun with their friends and create an exciting atmosphere for the athletes," Swedenhjelm said. "The whole purpose of the group is to make people more aware of the great athletic teams that we have here at Truman."

Anderson, Hanselmann and Swedenhjelm will meet with the president and vice president of Truman's chapter of the American Marketing Association next week to formulate a plan for the near future. One of the group's main goals is to increase sponsorships from vendors who want to get their word out at Truman and become more involved with the athletics scene.

"It's going to involve some marketing to inform the public about what it is that we are trying to do," Anderson said. "We want to get the word out there that basketball is playing on this night versus this opponent, this is the halftime event or the theme for the night, and you should come and participate and have fun."

Anderson said she also wants to

establish a committee with representatives from the major organizations on campus to help brainstorm ideas, spread the word throughout campus and also find volunteers to help out at the events.

"We are looking for students in marketing, business, communication, [Residence Life], Greek Life ... anybody that can represent a group of people on our committee and can reach out to other folks to help us achieve our goals," Anderson said. "The more people willing to be involved, the more progress we can expect."

Anderson said she is not focusing solely on Truman students because she also hopes to spark more interest from local residents.

"An idea we came up with is to have camp reunions during the Truman sports season, so if basketball has camps all summer long, we would keep a mailing list and then invite them all back to a game," Anderson said. "It is not just about getting more people buying admission tickets, we really want to be able to fill the stands with excited fans."

Another concept the group

came up with for the spirit club is giving out T-shirts to all of the members to wear at games. The members also could help with some of the promotional schemes such as throwing free shirts out into the crowd or giving away coupons for free concessions.

"We want more people to come to our events and make some noise and support the team on a regular basis," Hanselmann said. "Keeping people entertained during the natural breaks in the game is important because the more fun they have, the better the chance they will come back for the next game."

Swedenhjelm said more fans displaying their purple pride in the stands at games translates into more camaraderie on the rest of Truman's campus.

"One of the main things about having school spirit is having something in common to be proud of, and if our whole campus can be proud of our athletic teams, then we will have a sense of togetherness that will help foster a good environment on our campus," he said.

NEWS | In Brief

Former athletes plead guilty

Two former football players involved in an assault outside the Wooden Nickel in 2005 have pleaded guilty to second-degree assault, a felony offense.

Josh Kilcrease and Paul Darby both pleaded guilty this past Tuesday at the Macon County Courthouse. The pleas came after the third suspect, Darnell Williams, was sentenced to two years probation in February after submitting a written plea.

Kilcrease and Darby will be sentenced July 9 and could face up to seven years in prison or one year in a county jail and a possible fine of up to \$5,000. Both men remain free on bond until their sentencing.

Textbook legislation passes

The Missouri Legislature passed the Textbook Transparency Act last month, and the bill is scheduled to go into effect Aug. 28, 2008.

HB 2048, sponsored by Rep. Jake Zimmerman (D-Olivette), requires textbook publishers to provide certain information to faculty members upon request. Publishers will be required to make available the price of textbooks as well as substantial revisions to textbooks. It also requires public institutions of higher education to develop a process that would allow students to use financial aid to purchase textbooks for courses at bookstores on campus.

Fountain to be repaired

Repairs are set to begin within the next week for the fountain located on the Mall outside the Student Union Building.

Physical Plant Director Karl Schneider said workers will be repairing and replacing missing and loose bricks. Schneider said the repairs are taking place to increase the aesthetic appeal of the fountain as well as to remove the risk of people being hurt by the uneven and loose bricks. Schneider also said the only material cost will be mortar and that the repairs will be relatively inexpensive.

Student Union Director Sujit Chemburkar said the fountain should be addressed now because of its poor condition. Chemburkar said only the repairs are necessary now because the fountain is set to be renovated as part of a larger project that will take place in the future.

-Reporting by Slavina Stoyanova

Two art exhibits to open

The Truman Art Gallery will host the annual Visual Communications Portfolio Review on Tuesday, May 5.

The event will open with a reception at 6 p.m. and will continue until 7:30 p.m. This will be an opportunity for senior Visual Communications majors to display their design portfolios and engage in informal discussion about their work and ideas.

Students enrolled in Drawing II also will have an additional exhibit running at the Kirksville Arts Association titled "The Naked Truth." The exhibition will run until May 31 during the Kirksville Arts Association normal business hours.

Student Senate | In Brief

- The Senate passed a money motion to allow SOC to use \$45 from their budget to reimburse APO for a borrowed, damaged trampoline.
- Senate approved a resolution on the Student Conduct Code.
- Senate approved the Student Vision Document
- Senate approved the Constitutional Review Committee document.
- Senate discussed for diversity chair and publicity chair positions.
- Senate is looking to pass a motion to change its attendance policy.
- Senate reviewed plans for Dobson renovations, which include:
 - Adjustable heating and air conditioning in every room
 - Lounges similar to Missouri Hall
 - C-Store on the first floor
 - Back entrance with spots for bikes
 - More computers on each floor
 - First floor laundry room
 - Wiring for card swipe capabilities
- Senate discussed the Academic Affairs Report and the publishing of the Study Abroad Handbook.
- Senate discussed the Guide to Sustainability packet from ECO that may be handed out at the end of this year or the beginning of next semester.
- Senate discussed the possible addition of two pool tables and a DDR game in the SUB.

DPS | Reports

- 4/23 Freshman Rachel Mattix was issued a Missouri Uniform Complaint and Summons for minor in possession of intoxicants.
- 4/25 A burglary was reported in a Magruder stock room.
- 4/26 A theft was reported from a vehicle.

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