

OUR VIEW

Blunt's new proposal applies law selectively

Gov. Matt Blunt has proved once again that he is no more than a reactionary.

His proposal to strengthen a law prohibiting illegal immigrants from obtaining driver licenses (see story, Page 1) is not only redundant but a flagrant violation of a legal system we expect to sustain equality.

"Equality before the law" means that equivalent crimes should carry equivalent penalties, something you would think Blunt, who in the last two months has publicly declared his support for a girls' empowerment program and personal records access in the name of equality, would understand after four years in office. But apparently he allows other states, with other concerns, to set his agenda.

To announce his yet-nebulous proposal, Blunt considered the issue of illegal immigrants behind the wheel momentous enough to warrant a two-day, statewide tour, during which he gave few details on the plan's implementation.

Perhaps he avoided elaborating because the proposal does absolutely nothing new. Gubernatorial candidate Jay Nixon pointed out that already, illegal immigrants cannot get driver licenses because of stringent identification requirements that have been in place for more than two years. What's more, the proposal does nothing to stanch the flow of illegal immigrants who do obtain driver licenses - many of whom use falsified documentation.

But OK, at least in principle, Blunt has the right idea.

Or does he?

If we refuse driver licenses to illegal immigrants because they have misrepresented themselves, why should we provide these ("gateway documents") to convicted frauds and identity thieves? If anything, citizen lawbreakers should merit an even greater penalty because they already are familiar with the rules of the game.

So why has Blunt chosen to selectively focus on the state's un-

documented population, rather than applying the law evenly to citizens and non-citizens alike who commit the same crimes?

Apparently, because he is unable to think for himself. Time and time again, the Blunt administration has acted not on behalf of the state's 5.8 million citizens but to show he's man enough to play with the big boys in other, more attention-demanding states.

To quote Blunt's press release, "The New York governor concocted a scheme to issue driver licenses to illegal immigrants. A plan like that might sound good to politicians in New York City or Washington, D.C., but it would not be good here in Missouri. Under my plan, people who are here illegally will not get a driver license. And if anyone tries to help them get one, they will be prosecuted, and punished."

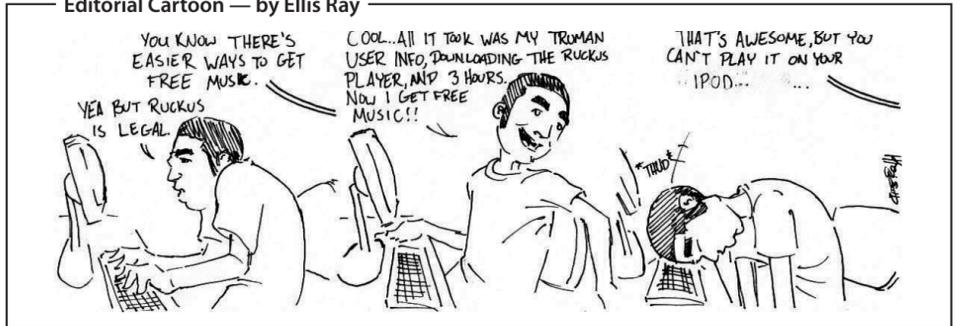
Missouri is not New York, Blunt says, so we ask why Missouri's laws should be a reflection of New York's issues. The highest estimate of illegal immigrants in our fine state, compiled by the Pew Hispanic Center, is 35,000 to 65,000, a mere drop in the bucket compared with our teeming 5.8 million-person population.

In New York, however, illegal immigrants make up more than 3 percent of the state's population, three times the percentage of undocumented people in Missouri.

Here, it's already virtually impossible for people of questionable citizenship status to get a driver license without committing the crime of fraud, so none of Blunt's bluster really matters. But as long as he draws attention to the "illegals," perhaps we won't notice how he ignores "equality before the law" when it suits him. Or at least, when it suits his party's agenda.

Maybe before boxing up the "illegals" and shipping them out, Blunt could learn something from the thorn that pains him so - at least illegal immigrants took a risk to better their lives. We need a governor who will do the same for his constituents.

Editorial Cartoon — by Ellis Ray



Letters to the Editor

No "slow response" from staff to correct fire alarm problems

I have to take exception to the article by Kelsey Landhuis in the Nov. 15 issue of the Index titled "Missouri Hall fire alarm fix need not have taken so long." The Missouri Hall staff frequently was in contact with both the Campus Planning and Physical Plant offices throughout the final stages of the hall renovation, as well as during the drawn-out period of the fire alarm system debacle. There was no slow response from the staff in addressing this problem.

In addition, there was no lack of action from the residents, and their discontent did not go unnoticed. In fact, the patience, understanding and restraint they displayed were commendable.

Before Missouri Hall was occupied, Campus Planning and Physical Plant personnel were in contact with the architect/engineering firm as well as the fire alarm system vendor/manufacturer. We specified the alarm logic and sensitivity levels for the various areas and equipment in the building and were assured that system was set up per our specification. Unfortunately, because the alarm program is proprietary, we do not have access to it to verify those settings or make changes ourselves.

When the false alarms occurred, the alarm system vendor was notified each time and given the details of the alarm. In September, after a few of the false alarms had occurred and the manufacturer's alarm system technician had not shown up at Missouri Hall despite our requests, I personally called the manufacturer and lodged a complaint. The technician called me back within 30 minutes and arrived two days later to make some adjustments and repairs to the system. At that time, the technician told us again that the system was set up and programmed as we desired and that the false alarms should stop.

When the false alarms started again, we continued to report them to the manufacturer's customer service department, and I personally called twice more, expressing our rising concerns. Through all of this, we worked closely with the Missouri Hall staff and the Office of Residence Life to make sure that everyone was fully informed and that all alarms were properly and accurately reported. When the 4 a.m. alarm occurred, I lost my patience with the alarm system manufacturer and called them for the fourth time and requested to talk to the person in upper management who was in charge of customer service.

While I had a member of corporate staff on the phone, the member verified our proper reporting of the previous alarms and my three previous calls. In addition, he accessed online the Missouri Hall alarm system and verified that it was not programmed properly, nor were the sensitivities set properly. He reset most of the sensitivity levels right then, and dispatched a technician here to rework the programming and sensitivities, which must be adjusted on-site.

I later learned that, at about the same time, the campus planner also called a corporate vice president there, expressing to him the same dissatisfactions and concerns that I had. It appears now that the situation has been resolved, but it disappoints me greatly to see an article that casts a disparaging light on the timely and sincere efforts of quite a few good people.

Tim Baker

Assistant Director of Physical Plant

Professor speaks out against condemnation of medical terms

I am writing in response to a pro-life advertisement in the Nov. 15 issue of the Index that took issue with the phrase "products of conception." The ad implied "products of conception" is a dehumanizing term meant to confound the personhood of a fertilized ovum. I am concerned that the misleading text of the ad might leave readers with an inaccurate understanding of this clinical term.

There are three very compelling reasons for the appropriate use of the phrase "products of conception" to describe tissue resulting from fertilization of an egg cell. First, there are many things a fertilized egg cell might become other than a viable embryo. Many fertilized eggs pass through the uterus with menstrual flow without implanting. A blighted ovum is an implanted but empty gestational sac with no embryonic tissue. A hyda-

tidiform mole is a rare but potentially cancerous, invasive proliferation of tissue, also with no embryo. There also are numerous non-viable congenital anomalies that can result in a fetus that challenges the boundaries of moral personhood.

Second, there are several kinds of tissue resulting from even the most common, non-pathological fertilized ovum: The umbilical cord, placenta and amniotic membranes are all products of conception. A clinician documenting the end of a pregnancy under any circumstances, from elective termination to term delivery, must note the disposition of these clearly non-person products of conception.

Finally, an emotionally neutral term like "products of conception" often is the most compassionate way to describe tissue passed with loss of an early pregnancy. Early pregnancy loss is far more common than most Americans realize, and every pregnancy loss is different. A woman experiencing the end of pregnancy with something other than birth of a live infant might feel anything from relief to intense grief.

Using the clinically accurate term "products of conception" rather than "baby" or "tissue" protects the woman's right to define her loss and might support a simpler emotional recovery.

Melissa Blagg Holcomb

Assistant Professor of Nursing

Professor points out that life exists before fertilization of egg

Sean Cooksey's letter attacking "Plan B" emergency contraception in the Nov. 8 issue of the Index is based on a couple of assumptions that should not go unchallenged.

First, Cooksey asserts that Plan B is really an abortifacient because, although it will not interfere with an already-existing pregnancy, it might prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg in the uterus. Pregnancy is considered to begin with the implantation of a fertilized egg, but Cooksey says that doesn't matter because "life begins at fertilization."

Well, not really. Eggs are living cells and sperm are living cells. The fertilized egg does not come to life at the moment of conception. The real issue is not whether a fetus, an embryo or a fertilized egg is alive or human. The real issue is whether it is a person in the same ethical sense as those of us who read this letter are persons. And the question is whether the potential of "person-ness" in a fertilized egg is more important than an actual and unquestionable person who might not wish to become pregnant.

Second, Cooksey's view of sex is uncompromisingly grim: He states that nobody should engage in sexual activity unless they are rational and mature enough to accept the possibility of parenthood as a result. Well, men and women have sex for rational and irrational reasons, and many times the reasoning is not very mature.

Sometimes sexual encounters occur under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Sometimes women are raped. And sometimes even responsible and mature persons are swept away by passion or are sabotaged by a malfunctioning condom. Not every sexual encounter will be or should be a decision to maybe have a child. Women should not be punished for imperfection by the fear of unwanted pregnancy.

Every woman's Plan A is to never find herself at such a risk. But if Plan A doesn't work, it's good to have Plan B.

Cynthia Cooper

Professor of Biology and

Mary Sims

Kirksville resident

Atkinson doesn't ameliorate concerns about Greek Life

I read with dismay Nathan Atkinson's opinion in the Nov. 15 issue of the Index. What I suppose I expected from Mr. Atkinson's article was an erudite, systematic defense of the Greek Life.

Disappointingly, all that we, the readers, received were the inarticulate, generalized ramblings of the status quo. Allow me to elucidate: Atkinson, as well as his online colleagues who commented upon my letter, attacked my opinions as stereotypes that were misconceived. Indeed, if I can make my way through Atkinson's prose correctly, it seems that all I have pinpointed are isolated incidents that are

irrelevant to Greek Life at Truman — never mind that the Delta Zeta chapter at Truman still regards the members of DePauw's Delta Zeta sorority as "sisters."

So, let us examine solely Greek Life at Truman. To begin with, Greek systems, as they are gender exclusive, illustrate a general primitive attitude toward men and women that, one hopes, universities would set out to deconstruct. In point of fact, I would argue that the Greek system commits violence toward the Women's Movement in that it maintains the status quo (e.g. the separation of the sexes). Thereby, it damages the efforts of the oppressed by maintaining those normative gender roles. Whatever "feminism" sorority members might espouse self-destructs in light of the backward nature of these groups. Therefore, the underpinning notions of Greek organizations are, at their most basic, sexist.

Don't believe me?

Witness the theme parties so beloved by fraternities and sororities. Among the most popular, as I recall, are "Jungle Fever" (racist) and "Office Joes and Secretary Hos" (sexist) — but the list could go on and on. And whether certain fraternities or sororities did not directly engage in such activities does not absolve them as members of affiliated groups, they tacitly approve of such behavior. However, what is more distressing is the would-be innocuous manner with which fraternities and sororities present themselves.

As Atkinson describes, his fraternity brothers have kept him sane during his time at Truman. I suppose what Atkinson is implying is that fraternities or sororities have some ability to take care of their associates better than any other group of friends might be able to do — never mind that Atkinson cannot point to anything tangible that shows that Greek organizations are better at taking care of their members any better than unofficial social groups.

More poignantly, we cannot regard fraternities or sororities as simple groups of friends because they most certainly are not. One hopes that friends do not have rigid power structures that demand homogeneity and coerce individuals into doing things they would rather not. Furthermore, most groups of friends do not pay to be each other's friend. One also hopes that most groups of friends do not construct committees to inculcate prospective acquaintances with silly notions of "brotherhood" and "sisterhood."

It seems to this writer that because these people cannot justify the existence of their groups, they have devoted little, if any, time to critically understanding their participation. If they did, they would realize that their groups are childish boys and girls clubs designed only for propagation of social norms. Truman no longer should support these groups in any way. That means no special funding, no special residence hall rooms, no support whatsoever for these groups. And to quote a famous Greek, "thus is shown."

Robert Topping

Sophomore

Index Op-Ed pages don't provide enough positive messages

Every Thursday I look forward to getting the newest Index. It is a great source of news and information about the University community.

But every week, I am incredibly disappointed by the opinions page, which is invariably another criticism of the University. Riddled with finger pointing, these columns continually send the message that the editors have little confidence in the administration of this school.

Just once, it would be refreshing to open the paper and find an article of praise, one that inspires school pride instead of perpetuating an "us/them" mentality against the University. We chose to come here. We are part of this school, not victims of it. It is so easy to find what is wrong and criticize it blindly. It takes so much more creativity to find what is right and write about it with the same fervor.

Please rise to the challenge and show us that you are not just students complaining, but are true journalists who are proud to report about Truman.

Erin Collins

Junior

INDEX

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