

## OUR VIEW

### Student Senate merits praise for hard work

You probably missed it. In what was arguably one of the most important events on campus this year, Student Senate presidential hopefuls sophomore JoEllen Flanagan (current Senate student affairs chair) and junior Lizz Esfeld (current Senate president) went head to head Tuesday night about issues that affect you as a Truman student. And you probably didn't even know it was happening. Some people will see the Senate election posters hanging on already over-crowded bulletin boards on campus and allow the message to blend into the white noise of visiting speakers and internship opportunities. We'd like to warn against letting that happen. We understand that as students, you've been mired in a more than year long vote-fest. With each new election — national and local — you get bombarded with orders (a fair share from us) to hit the polls. This time it's a little different, however, because we're not asking you just to vote, we're asking you to perk up your ears and take notice of what's going on around you. And what's going on around you is a pretty admirable display of University work ethic.

Most of you probably didn't see Esfeld stand before a room full of 500 faculty members as they met to discuss an impending budget crisis during Winter Break and passionately make a case for students to be kept informed, kept involved and kept at Truman. Many of you probably haven't taken advantage of any of the Student Conduct Code meetings Flanagan has worked tirelessly to set up to assure that your rights as a student are protected and that the Code best represents the student body. And probably no one imagined that as they crammed for tests the day before finals began last semester, Esfeld, Flanagan and the rest of Senate sat in a room in the Student Union Building for more than an hour discussing the best action to take for students, faculty and the future of the University, and how to leave the Truman experience intact. It would be hard to determine who

puts in the most work on campus, but as we see it, that's the beauty of this University: We all have passions — in class or outside of it — that we'll devote an insane number of hours toward just to make sure the job gets done right. It's who we are.

If Senate election trends continue as they have for the past few years, only about 25 percent of those same students will turn out for Senate elections April 6 to 8. We think Senate deserves more support than that, and we think it's in your best interest to give it. So don't just cast your ballot next week and then turn a blind eye to what happens among Senate members after that. Know what the body is discussing, and either get behind it or tell them why you think they're wrong. Meetings take place Sundays at 6 p.m. in the SUB Governors room, and students not only are welcome to attend, but usually are given a chance to make their voices heard.

Look what's happened at this University in the past two years thanks to Senate. The body held University officials accountable last year when questions arose about safety in the residence halls. Storm the Capital was a huge success this year, and a serious case was made for students being allowed to stay in the residence halls during longer breaks.

Those are the resolutions everyone hears about. Countless others are brought before the body at each meeting, and although some don't secure a very big portion of the spotlight, or maybe none at all, it doesn't mean they don't do the job they were intended to do on a smaller scale.

We've all already seen the future of Truman as we know it questioned when the threat of a budget crisis reared its ugly head in December. The crisis has faded, but know that your student government didn't sit back and passively watch events unfold. The point is, they're doing their part, and with this impending election, we think it's about time to recognize them for the work they do.

## CORRECTIONS

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please e-mail [index@truman.edu](mailto:index@truman.edu), call us at 660-785-4449, or send a letter to Index, 1200 Barnett Hall, Truman State University, Kirksville, Mo. 63501.

- A column on page 5 of the March 26 issue of the Index misidentified the sponsor of the Women and Gender Studies Conference. The conference was sponsored by the WGST Committee, not the Women's Resource Center.

## CARTOON

BY ALEX BOLES



## Letters to the Editor

### Renters should be aware of landlords' responsibilities

In light of the editorial on fair housing, "Fair housing law is win for the community" in the March 19 issue of the Index, I wanted to sound a word of caution on a related issue. Many standard leases used by landlords in Kirksville include clauses that are unenforceable as a matter of law. These clauses are designed solely to discourage tenants from bringing lawsuits against their landlords.

For example, exculpatory clauses that excuse landlords from all kinds of negligence are, many times, voided by courts for overbreadth. As another example, clauses that suggest a landlord does not have to mitigate his or her losses if a tenant moves out prematurely are often voided. These clauses suggest that if a tenant moves out early, he or she must pay rent for the remainder of the lease period, even if the landlord does nothing to re-rent the property. This often is not the case because landlords, in general, have a duty to try to recover their loss by mitigating their losses. There are many other examples, as well.

Tenants usually are not aware of their rights, and landlords can take advantage of their ignorance by peppering leases with clauses that are worthless under the law. In other words, you might not be responsible for certain payments, even if your lease says you are. Likewise, you might be able to recover damages from your landlord, even if your lease says you can't.

If you have a dispute with your landlord, contact a legal aid group for advice and check the Attorney General's Web site, <http://ago.mo.gov/> opinions, for advisory opinions. Legal aid groups include Mid-Missouri Legal Services, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri and Legal Services of North-east Missouri.

are based on morality that has been widely accepted by most people for millennia. Today, some conclude from the apparent lack of a moral consensus in our society that morality is a matter of individual preference, whether that preference is environmentally or genetically determined. This leads many to say that moral rightness depends only on being true to oneself. Using this dubious standard as the primary moral consideration, the City Council passed an ordinance that will force some people to violate their own principles with respect to how they use their property. In the absence of any moral absolutes recognized by present day society, we maintain that using force (through the guise of the law) will bring no resolution of attitudes on issues rooted in moral choices.

David Garth  
Associate Professor of Mathematics  
Jonathan Smith  
Associate Professor of Geography

### Greater voting change needed in Missouri

I was very interested in Kelly Kiesel's article on the front page of the March 26 issue of the Index about Secretary of State Robin Carnahan's admirably feminist and appropriately pro-working class, Democratic early-voting legislative proposals. As a local and global vote urger, I have long resented the aloof, arrogant and patriarchal manner in which conservative, Republican, rich male officials extol the presently very limited polling station hours to suit their monied media interests.

But based on international newness in higher voting turnouts among we abroad in our preferred allegiances, should not Carnahan be thinking more radically and further ahead in this state of ours? In U.S. "herstory," after all, even the dullest, most sleep-inducing comatose college history textbooks cannot hush up that it was pioneering U.S. states that most advanced greater voting initiatives, like Wisconsin with its primaries to break up boss-ridden political party cliques, and Montana with its female state votes way before women had to chain themselves to White House railings to get President Wilson to move on slowly extending the federal vote to their gender.

Abroad, in my native England, there is now serious anti-apathy talk of adopting something I urge Carnahan and innovative state legislators of both major U.S. political parties to consider enacting boldly at our state level in raising voters out of their television-induced apathy to all things non-armchair demanding. I think if a progressive, distinguished person like Carnahan were to adopt such a lead, then maybe the rest of the country might follow.

Namely, why not adoption of the Australian ballot system, as it has long operated there, raising voter turnout in far greater liveliness than in our tired-

older democracies like the U.S. and the U.K. This is basically a simple system to understand the number preference candidate vote. First, you are compulsorily obliged to vote on payment of fine unless sick or genuine excuse-certified, and second, you have a numbered preference set of votes. This enables you to state "none of the above" or vote for minority parties like the Greens if you really want more than the two big parties. Labor, socialists or the Liberal/Nationals, the conservatives.

Far from being an infringement of civil apathies, as vested interest elite opponents in the U.S., the U.K. and Canada mislabel it, there is abundant evidence: Voter turnout in Australia for almost 100 years now has been as high as Carnahan and other reformers want it here. Best of all, even we notoriously status-quo Brits have been successfully copycatting — although unfortunately not mandatory voting in civic duty — preference voting in London, bringing in fewer capitalist women and workers' parties. Carnahan, why not Missouri too?

Larry Iles  
Kirksville resident

### Further effort needed to break down gender roles

I'd like to thank Tyler Retherford for his write-up on masculinity at the Women's and Gender Studies Conference last week, but I need to address a few points he brought up.

First, I would like to point out an error on Retherford's part — the WGST conference was put on by the WGST committee, not the Women's Resource Center.

Although Retherford is sensitive to issues of gender from a populist standpoint and briefly addresses issues of oppression and discrimination, his call for more men to engage in the "gender debate" is exactly the kind of rhetoric that gender studies try to dismantle. His suggestion that gender studies should incorporate "both genders" requires an essential binary that still restricts people from cultivating identities that help them live better lives. And although it's good to point out changes in the media that might edge toward alternative depictions of gender, I hardly think Judd Apatow's films do anything more than reiterate the tired perspective that men and women essentially are separate and different — only this time, the guys are guys because of their sloppy emotions and not despite them.

Breaking down stereotypes and including multiple perspectives is a good start, as Retherford suggests, but this will require much more than "guys talking about what it means to be a guy." It will require a willingness to admit that our behavior isn't so much bound to our body parts at all.

Jason Qualls  
Senior

## INDEX

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### Editorial Policy

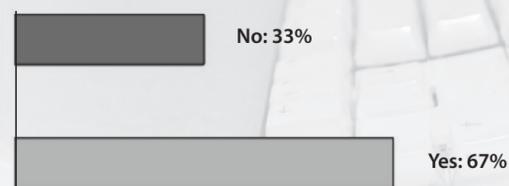
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