

OUR VIEW

## Tasing protocol must be strictly obeyed

“Don’t tase me, bro!” These words were immortalized in 2007 by a University of Florida student who was arrested and tased in the middle of a forum with U.S. Senator John Kerry. The incident brought tasing to the forefront of discussion in the media.

Tasing has become a sort of joke since then — Florida prison guards subjected more than 40 children to a stun gun shock on “Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day” in May, according to the New York Times.

This mentality needs to change. Tasing is dangerous, and it can cause harm when used incorrectly. Police officers need to adhere to the strict protocol for the ethical use of tasers.

Police officers follow the Force Continuum for dealing with stages of aggression in suspects, according to Police Policy Studies Council. If they follow it correctly, they should only use tasers after they’ve attempted to diffuse the situation, given verbal commands and used open hand techniques. The system leaves the decision to tase at the officer’s discretion.

It’s important that the officer’s discretion is objective. Although the taser is not considered a lethal weapon, it still has proven to be dangerous and traumatic for individuals in past cases. Stories concerning police brutality and abuse, or even plain stupidity, like Florida prison guards using stun guns on children, might be the exception to the rule, but they do happen.

So when the city council approved the Kirksville Police Department’s request to provide a taser for each officer we were skeptical at first. Previously, KPD had tasers, but not every officer had his own. Tasing has decreased this year, according to the police

department, so we didn’t understand why more tasers were necessary.

But providing each officer with his own taser will hold each officer more accountable for his use of tasers.

Each officer handling his own taser and not sharing with numerous officers will help ensure that suspects aren’t being tased unnecessarily or for too long. Each taser device includes a built-in audit tracking system, according to manufacturer TASER International, Inc. It records the time and date of every trigger pull — “verifying usage patterns to corroborate an officer’s report or to audit an alleged misuse.”

Although police have a system to determine when someone should be tased, tasing should be a measure of last resort. Although police avoid tasing the young and elderly, someone in their 30s might have a heart condition that makes the heart susceptible to ventricular fibrillation when tased, which will cause the chambers of the heart to beat in an unsynchronized, rapid way, according to the American Heart Association. Ventricular fibrillation can lead to collapse and sudden cardiac death without immediate medical attention. Manufacturers always will assure that tasers are safe, but when any weapon is used, severe, life-threatening consequences can occur.

Officers shouldn’t take tasing lightly. The authority to subdue and control others comes with great responsibility. To ensure the safety of citizens, police should closely monitor their tactics, making sure those means don’t turn into police brutality. “Don’t tase me, bro” is a disturbing video to watch, because whether you agree with the officer’s right to arrest and tase that student or not, the sounds of his pain from the tasing will chill you to the bone.

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.

- The story on page 2, “Students battle for bill on campuses” implied that Claire McCaskill is a Missouri State Senator. She is actually a U.S. Senator.
- The jump on page 7 from the page 1 story, “Krueger recovers from heart attack,” was not complete. The final words were “happening,” Cozette said.”

CARTOON

By Alex Boles



## Letters to the Editor

### Health care should be viewed as a right

I shudder to think of the state of our society if it were governed by Mr. Cooksey’s standards. Though, really, it’s not too far off from today. The American Journal of Public Health estimates that more than 44,000 people in the United States die because of lack of health insurance. Tell their families that health care shouldn’t be a basic right. I’m questioning as well whether we’d have public education, as this would surely qualify under “socialized education.” Indeed, would Mr. Cooksey even be going to the same school in his ideal world, as Truman is a state school, and therefore subsidized by the state government, making it a part of this terrible, right infringing “socialized education?”

Mr. Cooksey is not wrong in his analysis of the negative rights implied in the Declaration of Independence. These are important rights not to be discarded by society. If we want to look at it strictly as a matter of rights, then, yes, it would be violating the property rights of the rich to tax them for providing health care for the poorest members of society. But let’s pose the question in the ethical realm. Which outweighs the other, the wealth of the richer section of society or the health and lives of the poorest? For whom should the government be most concerned, and therefore look out for first? Which is more morally important? The answer is evident to any person with so much as a sliver of conscience. A society in the 21st century governed only by negative rights is a truly archaic, brutal place.

Is it possible that humans are endowed with a positive right to life? Virtually every other industrialized nation in the world believes so. The fact that both a nation such as

Luxembourg, which has a GDP per capita of \$81,000, and a nation such as Paraguay (GDP per capita at \$4,200) provide all of their citizens with health care shows that both wealthy and poor nations believe that each person has a true right to life. The number of citizens that die because of a lack of health care in their nations is zero. Oh, and by the way, both nations spend less money per capita on health care than we do (\$6,610 and \$710 versus the United States’ \$6,714.), while insuring everyone. In other words, these nations do a better job of securing their citizens’ property rights than we do, while covering everyone. Amazing.

But of course, all this concern for others and their positive right to life is just a “perversion” of the blessed negative rights in the Declaration of Independence. We should simply provide all citizens with hamburgers as well as health care, because the right to a healthy life and the right to fast-food are completely comparable and go hand in hand.

To continue to deny the right to health care to every citizen is not only elitist and morally repugnant, it is also economically stupid.

Ryan Campbell, student

### Truman art gallery deserves attention

Different colors, different shapes, different views. Yes, we went to the University Art Gallery! However, as we looked at each piece of art, we could not help but wonder how many students actually visit this space on their own accord. Many of us just recently paid our first visits to the gallery and had incredible, thought-provoking experiences. To our surprise, we realized this wonderful resource is under appreciated. But who is to blame? The students for not exploring the campus? The gallery for not publicizing well enough?

An array of artists display their hard work at the gallery every year, and yet most students do not even know where it is located. Stepping into Ophelia Parrish, you enter an entirely different world of light wooden floors, high arched windows, and fragmented art. The wide white walls are filled with colors and shapes unimaginable. The art displays are, at first glance, incomprehensible, until the viewer looks a little closer and comes to understand that this is not in fact a different world, but only someone else’s interpretation of it. Aaron Fine presents three series that grace the gallery with a striking balance of black and white charcoal and bold splashes of color while still having a realistic tone followed by a geometrically based design. His minimal use of bright contrasting colors is one that we had never seen before. In a side gallery, Wynne Wilbur’s ceramics collection opens the viewers’ eyes to the surprising beauty contained in everyday objects like pitchers and fruit bowls. The final artist on display, Priya Kambli, communicates her transition from India to the United States in the form of photography. One can develop a unique insight into her cultural background with personal and intimate photos.

Every piece of art showcased in the gallery is unique and can be interpreted differently by each person who takes the time to stop and look. One can critically observe and analyze the series of assorted art in the gallery and obtain a better understanding and appreciation of the time, energy and talent put forth by the creators. Students can even go to the gallery and meet the featured artists.

We encourage every Truman student to visit the gallery at some point in their college career. Art is meant to be a medium of expression. If no one knows about the gallery, to whom are the artists really speaking?

Matt Felzke, student

## INDEX

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### Editorial Policy

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## WEB POLL

Will you use Kirksville’s Craigslist page to buy or sell locally?

Maybe -26%

Yes -37%

No - 37%

This week’s question:

How often do you visit the University Art Gallery?

Vote online at [trumanindex.com](http://trumanindex.com)