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OUR VIEW

Journalists need federal shield law

While Thomas Jefferson was the U.S. Ambassador to France prior to his presidency, he said, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

Many have long considered the press to be the Fourth Estate, just as necessary to the smooth operation of the United States as any of the three branches of government.

Yet throughout the past decade, the U.S. judicial system has bullied journalists, holding several reporters in contempt of court for refusing to give up their confidential sources when called to testify. Journalists never have had a law on the federal level to protect their sources' anonymity, and some reporters have been forced to decide between giving up confidential sources and information they acquired in working on a story or facing jail time.

Legislators previously have done very little to stop this courtroom bullying. But that soon could change.

This morning, 19 U.S. senators on the Senate Judiciary Committee will consider S. 448, the Free Flow of Information Act. If passed, the bill would create a federal shield law for journalists and their employers. A version of the bill passed in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2007.

The Index Editorial Board strongly advocates this bill, which is even more important for journalists in Missouri as Missouri is not among the more than 30 states that have a state shield law.

The bill would not automatically excuse a journalist's obligation to testify in court. For example, if a journalist witnessed a crime or if the journalist acquired information that could prevent a death, kidnapping, substantial bodily harm or a threat to

national security, the journalist still would be legally required to testify.

Rather, the shield law would deem some information reporters obtain from sources as privileged and confidential, unless the court determines that all other reasonable sources have been exhausted and that disclosure of the information would be in the best interest of the public. Journalists and their sources would receive some level of court protection, similar to the protection granted in doctor/patient and attorney/client relationships.

We're not here to say that the journalist/source relationship is on parallel ground with a doctor/patient or attorney/client relationship. However, one key factor remains constant in these relationships. Much like doctors and attorneys need to have the full confidence of their patients and clients to effectively do their jobs, journalists need the full confidence of their sources to effectively craft stories — especially investigative stories that reveal government corruption and could potentially put the source in financial or physical danger if his/her name is revealed in court.

Missouri does not have a senator on the committee that will consider this bill today. Thus, the Editorial Board contacted the offices of two senators on the committee — Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) — who hail from neighboring states and voiced our support for the bill.

Now, we can only hope these senators and the other 17 members of the committee hear our voice and the voices of journalists nationwide and that committee members will support the bill when they meet today. As always, journalists will be watching their actions.

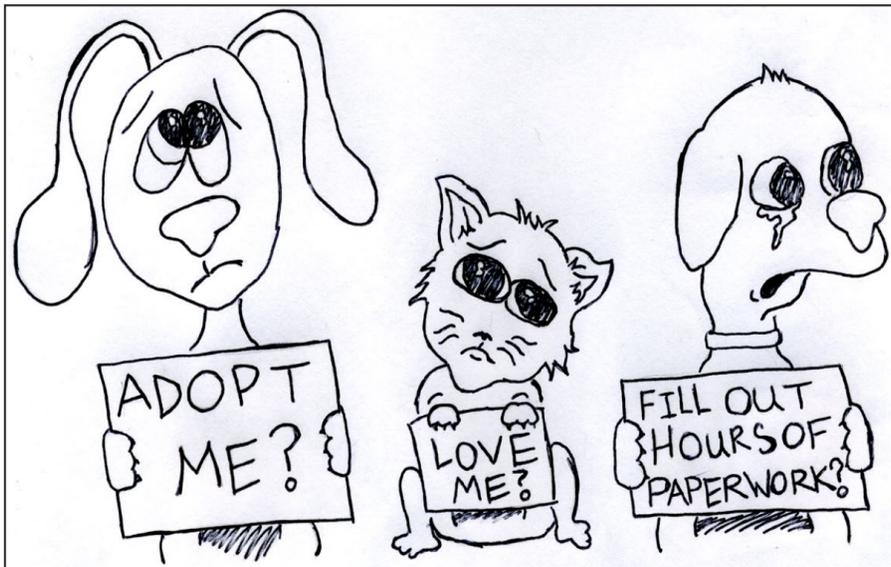
CORRECTIONS

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please e-mail 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 "Sisterhood allows diversity" on page 11 of the Sept. 10 edition of the Index incorrectly implied that Prim Roses is an unstructured organization. The organization is structured but chooses not to be a member of Greek Life.
- The men's golf outline on page 15 incorrectly identified sophomore Nik Bentzinger as a junior.
- The sports teaser on page 1 was incorrect. The men's golf team actually finished sixth at the Bulldog classic.
- The column on page 15 was incorrect. The football team lost to Pittsburgh State University 40-0 in 2007, not 41-0.
- Kyle Scholtz was misidentified as John Rothfusz during a portion of the story "Tennis starts season strong at invitational" on page 15 of the Sept. 17 edition of the Index.
- "Suicide opens door to unanswered questions," on page 10 incorrectly said that John Kevin Hines begins his speech on Oct. 22 at 7 p.m. The presentation actually will begin at 8 p.m.

CARTOON

By Alex Boles



Letters to the Editor

Closing of Planned Parenthood result of apathy

The problem with Zach Vicars' column last week, "Closing cause for celebration," was not its message, but that it was tragically spot-on on some points. Among other things, Vicars celebrated the loss of the Planned Parenthood clinic in Kirksville, and he lambasted its support for birth control measures. On these points, his message is dim, brutish and rather short-sighted.

The single-parent homes and all-too-young mothers of Kirksville deserve a choice in their lives that Planned Parenthood provided. But he also tossed into the mix some gratitude to the good people of Kirksville for "choosing life." This is where he perhaps found pearls among the swine he flung at us.

Vicars was right that Kirksville — especially the so-called liberal students who dwell within it — have chosen life.

Too many supposed liberals will mourn the loss of the clinic, and perhaps post a Facebook status update or chat about in the Student Union Building, but do little else. Too many supposedly interested persons will move on to more interesting things in a few weeks, if not a few days or a few moments. Far too many students, but not all, will do nothing at all. By doing nothing, you, a concerned student, craft a message you might not even be aware of.

If you truly care about the issue of Planned Parenthood's closing, or if you truly care about the issue of reproductive rights, craft the proper message. Give money to the organization or donate your time to a related cause. Do something

about an issue that you care about — do more than deliver a vituperative Facebook rant that vilifies some guy named Vicars who works at the Index. Do something.

However, if you merely wish to appear to care, continue to do as many of you have done already. The message you send is clear. If you wish to continue the charade, do nothing. You will succeed admirably, you will seem good-hearted to your seemingly good-hearted friends, and you will no doubt feel better about yourself for being so good-hearted.

But there will be no Planned Parenthood. There will be no chance for choice in Kirksville. Options for young women will have been limited or eliminated. And you will have done absolutely nothing. Your apathy will be the destroyer of your dreams.

Daniel Glossenger, alumnus

Health care is not a right, but a privilege

Many people who are against universal health care argue that the idea is well-intentioned, but unworkable. They have it half right — it is unrealistic. But what needs to be stated is that government-run, socialized medicine is intrinsically immoral and is not a right.

A right is a moral concept, and its function is to give an individual the liberty to an action from coercion or force. Further, the right of an individual does not impose a duty on others except for a negative one, the responsibility not to infringe on the right of the individual. The writers of the Declaration of Independence knew this when they argued for the fundamental rights of life, liberty, property, and the

pursuit of happiness.

But the right to property does not mean you are born deserving a house or clothes, no matter how badly you want or need them. It means you are free to work to earn them. The right to the pursuit of happiness does not mean that the government should pay for your ticket to a baseball game. It means it should not stop you from going.

But the idea of rights has been perverted for some time, with political parties arguing that people have "rights" to education, to protection from old age and unemployment, to a living wage and to health care. The question for one advocating these rights is this: At whose expense? Each of these so-called "rights" is a violation of others. They imply that each of us is entitled to the labor of someone else, that the government should take the products of an individual at the point of a gun and give them to someone else. This is morally repugnant.

Health care has no special properties. It is a good like all others. Saying one is born with a right to health care is no different than saying one is born with a right to hamburgers. And like all goods, the moral way to gain them is through persuasion and voluntary exchange. This is the free market. Socialized medicine destroys this, replacing voluntary action with coercion, replacing the ability of the mind with the end of a gun, taking by force the wealth of one individual and giving it to someone who has not earned it. It enslaves doctors to their patients. It sterilizes the service of medicine. It forces the individual to become a slave for the good of others. Beware of the incremental deterioration of our liberties under the guise of a "right" to health care.

Sean Cooksey, junior

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Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The first copy is free, and additional copies cost 50 cents each. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the editor in chief, managing editor, news editor, copy chief and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

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WEB POLL

Will the closing of Planned Parenthood affect you or your partner?



This week's question:

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

Vote online at trumanindex.com