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EDITORIAL

Our View

Students must vote to see change in Student Senate

Not only do Truman students have the immense privilege of voting for their student leaders, each year they can do it without even getting dressed. All we have to do is go online. While voting, we can see every candidate's platform, so no excuses about not knowing who the candidates are and what they stand for. We have the chance to participate in democracy. Yes, student democracy, but democracy nonetheless.

Last week, 1,621 students cast their votes in the Student Senate presidential race — that's approximately 27 percent of the student body. That is a high percentage of student turnout, according to a 2005 University of Iowa study regarding voter turnout in student elections. But for the ease of voting, the impact a single vote can have and the importance of deciding how Senate spends its money, that percentage is too low for us.

If students want be more satisfied with Student Senate, they actually have to participate in the process — otherwise Senate never will achieve the legitimacy it needs to enact the change students want to see. It is a vicious cycle. Students say Senate is useless — that they don't listen to students or make decisions in their best interests. But Senate likely thinks the majority of campus is useless — they don't share ideas, they don't come to meetings and they don't even vote in elections.

Senate is important. To end this cycle, students have to start caring about student government, because the minute students stop caring about it is the minute we give up the privilege of democracy.

To end this cycle of apathy, students can start informing themselves. Go to Senate meetings, listen to what is going on and what senators are pushing for. Did smokers show up to Senate to defend their rights to light up when Senate wanted to pass a full smoking ban on campus? No. Although the Board of Governors didn't pass a full ban, Senate might have pushed less if they had heard an outcry from smokers. Maybe the Board would have passed the ban if campus had risen in outcry about the use of tobacco.

Find out what Senate is spending your money on. Financial decisions were a large part of Senate controversy this year, from defunding the Bike Co-op to Senate's nearly \$2,000 spent to join the American Student Government Association and send senators to the ASGA conference.

There are some issues, like the smoking ban, Senate cannot control completely. But students need to understand Senate had \$30,000 to spend this year. You are the people who should tell senators how you would like to see that money spent. Should Senate spend \$1,000 for HIV testing for campus, or \$1,900 to send students to petition in Jefferson City during Truman at the Capitol? Maybe there is a better way to spend that money, a way that will further the campus, help serve more students or improve academics. As long as you stay away from the debate, the same small group of people who are involved will continue to push their agendas and their ideals, instead of best serving the student body's interests.

Maybe you are busy Sunday evenings at 7 p.m. during Senate meetings. That's fine. But stay involved in the conversation. Check Senate's website each week for meeting minutes. Email a senator who can speak on your behalf, submit a proposal to Senate, read the Index, watch News 36 and listen to KTRM. You have to become involved in the conversation — otherwise our small democracy will fail. Stop sitting idly by and letting other people make the decisions without you.

Truman is supposed to be full of the best and brightest minds in the Midwest. Yet the best and the brightest, the students who know the history of the fight for democracy, the students who have studied the fights of women and blacks for the right to vote in this country, these students are apathetic to that right. Maybe we've been trained to think one vote doesn't matter, but think about this. The race for president of the student association was won by a mere 78 votes. So next year, when Senate does something you don't agree with, consider how giving up five minutes of your time could have changed it.

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.

cartoon

By Allison Bannister



Letters to the Editor

Unequal pay between genders persists

April 12 was the national observance of Equal Pay Day, the day when women and men alike recognize the wage gap between working women and men. The United States Census Bureau found in 2010 that women are paid, on average, 77 cents for every dollar men make. That is a gap of 23 cents.

In Missouri, women's pay doesn't even measure up to the national average. We are paid 75 percent of men's pay.

Here are four ways to close the pay gap from the National Committee on Pay Equity:

First, we need to keep affirmative action programs in place to make sure education, jobs and promotion opportunities are open and offered to qualified women.

Second, employers must examine and correct their pay practices. Employers can get help in examining their pay practices through equal pay, self-audit guidelines from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Third, women must stand up for equal pay and for themselves. If a prospective employer cannot show that women and men are paid equally for the job you're seeking, it makes sense to look elsewhere. Positive signs include a hiring process that seeks diversity through affirmative action, written pay and benefit policies, job descriptions and evaluation procedures. A union for workers is another good sign. Women in unions earn 35 percent more than women in non-union workplaces.

Women who are paid less than men

must discuss the problem with their employer. If there's a union, ask for their help. If discrimination persists, file a complaint to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

A fourth way to close the pay gap is through federal legislation such as the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Fair Pay Act. That's not a solution popular with employers, but it may be necessary. For employers who continue to pay women less, legal penalties or EEOC action may be the only remedies.

Pay equity legislation is being introduced across the country and Missouri is no different. House Bill 349, introduced by State Representative Stacey Newman, requires equal pay for equal work, would establish a state commission to study wage disparity and requires employers to document their wages. Pay inequity not only hurts women, but their families as well.

Jennifer Weisbrod
senior

Kirksville's new code unfairly targets pit bulls

After reading the article about the banning of the pit bulls in Kirksville in the March 31 edition of the Index, I was in a state of anger toward the new code.

I think it is a bit extreme when a city bans one type of animal because they think it is too dangerous. In the article it says that there has been

reported dog violence around the city with dogs having pit bull characteristics. The banning of the pit bulls have raised many problems.

The first problem is that restricting just one type of dog won't cut down on the dog violence. Pit bulls have a stereotypical view of showing anger and aggression toward other dogs, but they only have those stereotypical behaviors if the owners treat the dogs terribly.

The second problem is the article states, "Kirksville has had reports of violent dogs with pit bull characteristics and there are concerns for city workers who have to be near these dogs," which means they aren't even sure if the dog violence is coming from the pit bull family.

Later in the article, it says if your dog has pit bull characteristics then you need an "AKC Canine good citizen certificate." If you don't obtain one of these certificates, then you must have a series of parameters you must comply with. These ordinances are you must have a 5 foot fence surrounding your property, the dog must be registered, you cannot leave the dog alone in your house and you must have at least \$100,000 worth of liability insurance on your dog. Realizing most people in Kirksville don't meet the financial qualifications, most of the owners will have to give up their dogs.

This brings up a final question — Is Kirksville planning on banning all dogs?

Daniel Jewett
freshman

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Serving the University community since 1909

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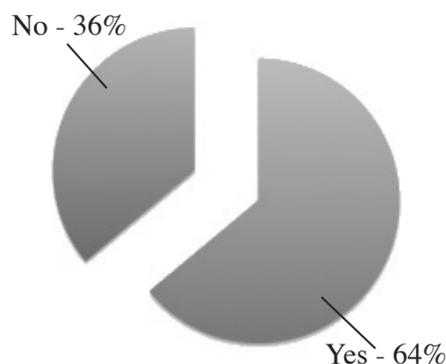
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Web Poll

Are unpaid internships a fair means of experience?



This week's web poll question:

Are you happy with the results of the Student Senate election?

Vote online at trumanindex.com