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EDITORIAL

Our View

Bill to drug test TANF recipients must be more clearly defined

These days, people will do just about anything to save a buck, and so will the government. However, the proposed bill to drug test potential recipients of government aid, might be taking the concept of saving your pennies too far.

This bill, which Representative Zachary Wyatt (R-District 2) supports, would require anyone applying for aid through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to be tested for drugs on a screening basis with the Missouri Department of Social Services. The process for who will be tested and when has not been decided yet. If found positive for illegal drug usage, recipients must wait one year and be referred to a rehabilitation center before re-applying for TANF.

While this bill is relatively new to the state of Missouri, it is not new in the U.S. Kansas and Oklahoma passed bills two years ago with similar stipulations. Other states including Minnesota and Hawaii also have had bills proposed. In 1999, Michigan passed a bill requiring TANF recipients to be drug tested — a restraining order shut down the program almost immediately. Three years later, the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the original court ruling deeming the law a violation of the Fourth Amendment and thus unconstitutional. And in Jan. 2009, a similar bill was proposed in Arizona, yet it failed in the Senate, according to foxnews.com.

This bill raises a lot of questions. While government assistance should not be used to feed a drug addiction, deciding who gets what and when is not black or white. Therefore, this bill needs to be more clear on what the screening process will entail before it goes to vote. Will there be random drug tests, or will the TANF recipients be informed of them in advance? How frequently will recipients be tested? These are questions that need to be addressed in advance. Not only will the answers be of major importance to potential recipients of this aid, but the details also will be ethical justifications for or against the bill's passage.

Who will be tested is another question that arises out of this bill. Should a single mom with three children and a poorly paying job be required to get a drug test to receive money to feed her children? We don't think so.

However, drug tests should be required only for TANF recipients who have a record of drug-related crimes. While we acknowledge that having a criminal record involving drug usage or the sale of drugs is not the only way to prove a person has been using, it is the only effective way within reason. Testing everyone applying for TANF would be a waste of time and money — money the government and the people who support this bill clearly want to save.

Terry Jones, political science professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, said it would cost the state millions of dollars to drug test all the TANF recipients, according to the Jan. 13 edition of the Index.

Testing everyone receiving government assistance leads to a slippery slope. Students frequently receive federal grants to pay for tuition, books or rent while in college — should they be required to take a drug test as well? What about the wealthy who receive tax cuts, should they have to pee in a cup to prove they are worthy of receiving a break due to their societal status?

The vote on the bill has not yet been determined. Hopefully this will provide adequate time to redefine the important issues of the bill including the details on the screening process and who will be required to be tested. Finding alternative methods to save state spending sounds like a good plan. However, no plan should be enacted without thorough deliberation of the potential consequences, especially one that would become a vital component in the lives of many in the state of Missouri.

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



Letters to the Editor

Local resident writes animal activism book

As utterly, proper a detailed venue as the Student Union Building, advertisement has been bought this very same 20 of January for the first TSU book-signing event of this new year. I hope I will be allowed, as it were, to pen this update concerning my such new animal rights biography of its early last century two native British originator challengers and their associate feminist and peace causes.

Simply signing "read-out" passages, free raffle copies sales will else not permit local people wonderfully and supportively giving up their pay time to attend.

I am learning the hard way that if you publish on a fairly recent, controversial political history then a slight deterrent is the sheer vitality factor of the sometimes alteration "x" factor of the unanticipated update event.

Following the success in American states of local propositional direct referenda votes like our own in Missouri last fall, of key American Humane

Society-backed animal-enhanced protection welfare amendments against puppy mill ownership overmuch, the similar British crises and reckoning on such issues has become more powerfully accentuated. In my view as an activist, all, thereby, to the positive good in outcome hope, and no, I don't just mean selfishly.

Because it gives all of a gained whole 2011 extra year expanse time, more book currency exists amongst the Opposition Labour and Green, dissident Liberal Democrat Commons backbench sitters.

For, intriguingly, the Missouri example seems to have inspired a small, brave band of mostly 25 conservative women governing MPs. To insist that the free vote, blood supporter, Right Center Coalition, UK PM Cameron pledged to appease the wealthy farmers and Labour fox hunter reversers be postponed by a whole year in what these women have shown is the massive unpopularity stink state.

In short conclusion, whilst I cannot claim that my book, which I am presenting today formally, is alone the causation factor for the welcome 2012

delay, especially as the Left Center UK Independent newspaper has shown that Waite, the Tory Agriculture minister, has been stealthily cutting on "cost economy" grounds even battery hen food safety inspectorate sizes. I do think its already startlingly high sales, particularly we noticed in UK Christmas back there amongst worker women, have helped. The animals' welfare delay cause, in spite of a vicious Tea Party style of UK Coalition regime may the BBC TV contrived upon us unselectively so.

Since the Far Right UK Economist and Spectator Times publications are baying treachery at Cameron-Clegg for alleged "sentimentalism" in his PM such delay readers of my book too should feel. They are making a salutary difference building upon your Missouri feminist animal rights family community choice values for 2011. For remainder, proud surety sure too.

Larry Iles
 Kirksville resident

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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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Comment of the week

In response to "Interim coaching tags leave questions for future":

"Sadly, I think the days of Truman being able to go toe-to-toe with Drury are over. Best of luck to Godlewski and Odenthal. They have a tough task ahead of them. Hopefully the swimmers will rally behind them."

-online comment

This week's web poll question:

Should the U.S. have stricter restrictions on purchasing firearms?

Vote online at trumanindex.com