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**EDITORIAL**

**Our View**

**Bill to abolish tenure could benefit, but needs revision**

The future of many Missouri educators has become less certain after the proposal of a bill to cut teacher tenure for primary and secondary schools (see story, page 3). This bill would require school districts to evaluate teachers annually in regards, partially, to their students' academic performance.

While a great educator should be rewarded, there are other ways than significantly lowering the standards to get them fired. This bill will rank teachers based on performance and reward those at the top with longer contracts and higher pay. And, by abolishing the tenure system, this bill will help to ensure a lasting quality throughout Missouri classrooms.

Abolishing tenure is not a radical idea. In 1997, Oregon got rid of the tenure system and started a rehabilitation program for underachieving teachers, according to Time Magazine. Other states like Connecticut, New York and Michigan have adopted alternatives to tenure, and in various parts of Ohio, officials began a more creative approach to reward and improve teacher performance, which is still in practice.

Part of the rationale behind abolishing the tenure system is that without the worry of being fired, it can be easy for teachers to fall into a rut and slack off. This bill would not allow that to happen. Having more frequent evaluations would force teachers to stay on top of their game because their job is more likely to be on the line. They would in turn continually be providing their students with the best possible education to ensure they leave a lasting impact for generations to come.

Overall, this bill seems to have positive ramifications. However, it must provide a more precise method for districts to evaluate teachers. Not everything about teaching can be quantifiable. Currently, teachers receive tenure based, partially, on how well their students perform on standardized tests. However, not all students are good test-takers. These types of tests say little about the credibility of the teachers. Yet this essentially could provide bad teachers, who happened to have a bright class of students one year, with a permanent position in front of the blackboard.

Also, because standardized test scores are so vital to the career of the teacher, a large portion of class time is spent preparing students to take the test, other areas of study could be neglected. These tests do not directly benefit the students as they do the teachers. For this reason, some students don't try to do well on them, which can affect a teacher's performance. Abolishing tenure would make it more difficult for bad teachers to gain permanent job security, but by evaluating teachers based on how much academic progress their students make, which is part of the intention of this bill, also could remove good teachers from the education field.

This bill should require districts to use a combination of tactics to evaluate teachers. For example, the administration or members of the school board periodically could sit in during a class to observe how the teacher utilizes time and interacts with students. By doing this, there would be a more accurate rationale for the rewarding or firing of a teacher instead of just basing decisions on students' academic progress.

A career in education is a sweet gig when you think about it. Where else can you have a three-month vacation each year? Where else will provide you with the security of never being fired after you have proven your capabilities by receiving tenure? Nowhere we know of. Maybe it is that way for a reason. By having to prove themselves, teachers will continue to provide students with the best education possible. However, the annual evaluations mentioned in the bill, threaten security too much. For example, if the evaluations were every five years, the growth and development of the teacher could be measured more accurately throughout time and would allow teachers to focus more on their students than the upcoming threat to their job.

Here in academia, we understand the benefits of having great teachers. We think tenure can, in some cases, act as a catalyst to send a decent teacher spiraling downward. Yet, a teacher's worth cannot be summed up with a few test scores, either. We are in agreement with the central aspect of this bill — abolishing tenure in primary and secondary schools — but a clearer and fairer evaluation process first must be determined to ensure teacher rights and student interests are met.

**corrections**

**cartoon**

by Danny Jaschek

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.



**Letters to the Editor**

**City Council candidate needs better rationale**

Oh, Larry, Larry, Larry. Look what you've done now. This is a fine kettle of fish! Shucks, the cat's out of the bag. As Ronaldo Magnus would say, "There you go again." You have obstreperously revealed that City Council candidate Betty McLane-Iles is your spouse. Oh, woe is me ... that will surely contribute to her impending defeat at the polls.

Hey, wait a minute! Maybe that's good — who wants a Chicago-style, ultra-liberal, socialist on a rural Missouri, common-sense, smalltown council, anyway? And, on page 8 of March 24 issue of the Index, she says the reason she's running is "because no other women were running" and, "because of the two members who are leaving?" And, her economic plan is "the bike path?" Darn, why didn't Phil Tate and the City Council think of that? Oh well, I suppose this is implicative of the current "progressive" United States presidential debacle — a catastrophe, disaster, failure, ludicrously calamitous. Praying for our nation.

*Dick Roberts  
Alumnus*

**Kirksville gas prices are higher than average**

Don't you think that it's a little bit strange that we continue to pay higher gas prices than some of the surrounding communities? And the question is: Why?

*Sal Costa  
psychology professor*

*Kathryn Miluski  
senior*

I travel a great deal for the University. I was in St. Louis a week ago and the gas was at \$3.31 to \$3.35 throughout the St. Louis area. Columbia's gas prices have been at \$3.29 for well over a week, and I have recently been to Quincy, Ill., this past Tuesday on the way the gas at Brashear was at \$3.34, Edina \$3.29, LaBelle \$3.29 and \$3.38 from Lewistown all the way to West Quincy, Missouri.

I think it is absolutely ridiculous that even as gas goes down by the barrel, we in Kirksville continue to be gouged by our gasoline prices. It is ridiculous that they will raise the price of gasoline when the day before you could have paid less for the same gasoline that has been in the ground for a day or two. I would like to know exactly what has been going on because, traditionally, Kirksville's gas prices have been less expensive than the surrounding areas.

Even Macon, which is usually higher on their gasoline prices, was 10 cents lower than what we pay in Kirksville. I strongly feel that we are being taken advantage of because, if you notice, when oil goes down by the barrel, they drop the price at the pump by a penny or two. But as soon as it goes up slightly, they raise the price 10 to 15 cents. I'm getting a little bit tired, and I'm sure most of you all are as well, of continually being gouged by the "Gasoline Lords" of Kirksville. It's time that we should all realize that we are being taken advantage of. Let's put an end to it.

**Students deserve time to relax during breaks**

In regards to the article "Teachers assign work as needed, despite breaks" in the March 24 edition of the Index, I beg to differ with the writer. I don't know about everyone else, but my break was not, nor has it ever been, entirely restful, without stress or as fun-filled as the writer depicted it. I worked for a vast majority of break, and not once in my time in Truman have I taken off to Florida or Colorado or wherever.

So around work, I had a number of large assignments to complete, which took up a vast majority of my "break." I know teachers don't do it to be mean, but sometimes a little bit of slack would be appreciated, especially when that sorry "break" may be the only opportunity I'll get to finish the assignment because of a dozen others right on its tail.

I know some people are lazy and don't want to do work over break, but I take offense to your column as someone who works hard and tries to actually accomplish something. Don't lump every student into the "dumber and lazier" category. Sometimes, "taking a few deep breaths and counting to 10" is ineffective. Maybe if you're not complaining you've just had things too easy.

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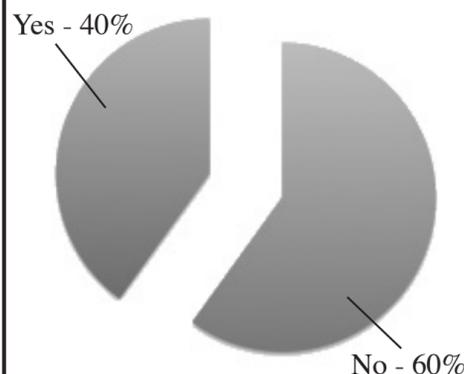
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**Web Poll**

Should teachers assign homework before a break?



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**Does Student Senate assess the needs of its constituents?**

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