

EDITORIAL

Our View

Eliminating the sale of bottled water would be impractical

We recycle scrap paper and old chemistry tests to reduce waste. But, an abundance of paper, recycled or not, still kills trees and harms the environment. So should the University ban the use of paper?

Probably not. Similarly, the University should not eliminate the sale of bottled water on campus (see story, page 1). However, the Environmental Campus Organization has been working with Sodexo to start this initiative to limit waste.

While we agree limiting waste is an important goal, this plan is not practical. Bringing a reusable water bottle and filling it in a drinking fountain sounds like a simple solution, but about 8,000 bottles of water were sold in Sodexo facilities during the four-month period between January and April 2011. Imagine how frustrating it would be to walk into Mainstreet Market before class to grab a bottle of water and discover they have been eliminated.

People understand the environmental concerns behind bottled water but will continue purchasing them out of convenience. Even if Sodexo stopped carrying bottled water, people still would find alternative sources to buy them, like gas stations or vending machines.

We do commend ECO for its constant attempts at limiting Truman State's carbon footprint. During the past, it worked with Sodexo to remove trays from the dining halls to limit water usage, and it worked. The difference, however, is not having trays did not legitimately affect anyone. Bottled water, though, is a simple option when you don't have a reusable bottle available. Also, the annoyance of not having a tray in a dining hall affects comparatively fewer people than the annoyance of not having bottled water, which is available to everyone nearly everywhere on campus.

Washington University in St. Louis successfully removed bottled water from its campus eating facilities in 2009. This couldn't have been an easy process — life style changes must first occur. If ECO is serious about this plan, it must start small by efficiently encouraging the use of reusable bottles to slowly wean people off bottled water.

Corrections

In a Nov. 10 features article, the name of the K-Life director was incorrect. His name is Kevin Harrison.

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please email 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 Sara Hahn



Letters to the Editor

Senate president thanks student body

This has been a busy month. Recently we've seen debates on: same sex equality, the University's role with the City Council, and wet tailgating. I know these are controversial topics, so I'd like to do my part to help explain where we stand.

I simply can't take credit for everything we've done this year. Aaron Malin has done a tremendous job leading the discussions on same sex benefits and equality. Drew Paulman has welcomed challenges to his proposal to further investigate strengthening the role of the University on the City Council. Both of these senators have proven themselves as bold leaders in a short time at Truman.

On the issue of wet tailgating, however, I have placed myself at the heart of the conversation. I feel very strongly about this issue, and I fully understand its complexities and controversial aspects. I've always known that in leadership roles you can't please everyone, and I welcome and appreciate the concerns that have been raised by Professor Poyner and others. The decision to pursue a policy change on tailgating is not one I took lightly, and I can assure everyone that I have heard the arguments against it, and I've done my best to address those issues.

The Student Senate has now passed a resolution, by unanimous consent, to permanently lift the policy prohibiting wet tailgating. Michael Baharen, the Chair of my research taskforce, deserves recognition for the impressive presentation he gave to the body. The results of a recent survey he and I organized revealed that more than 91 percent of the student body supports a change to allow for wet tailgating, with more than 82 percent indicating they would be at least somewhat more likely to attend a football game featuring tailgating. Our research and the data from that survey reaffirmed to me that this was the right course of action. Our resolution has now become part of a larger portfolio that we will send to the Board of Governors for further discussion.

To those who support our efforts, I am beyond grateful for your kind words and encouragement, and am honored to be moving forward with you on this issue. To those who do not agree with my decision,

I hear you as well. The blame for this resolution rests with me, and I would be glad to discuss my reasoning with you. As a student body and as a community we all collectively own every resolution that reaches my desk, and for that reason I feel we've done our part to make the future of the university a little brighter. If you're the leader of an organization that would like to make a statement on tailgating to be presented to the Board, please email me at rtn5517@truman.edu, and I will do my best to make your voice heard. Thank you all for your contributions to this discussion. I very much look forward to working with you in the future.

Ryan Nely
Junior and President of the Student Association

Same-sex benefits increase equality

I was pleased to see the Index use its front page last week to bring attention to a very important issue. In response to the headline "Equality: worth the risk?" the answer is, quite simply, yes.

This past Sunday, Student Senate voted "yes." By a margin of 14-1, they declared that encouraging the Board of Governors to allow faculty members with same-sex partners access to equal benefits is the right thing to do, and the student body overwhelmingly agrees. Last week, a survey was issued on TruView to gauge student opinion. Of the 775 students who answered the question "Should same-sex partners of Truman faculty be able to purchase health insurance through the University?" 83.87 percent of them responded with "yes." In addition, when asked the question "Should the Board revise its nondiscrimination policy to include sexual orientation?" 83.59 percent of them said "yes" as well. These overwhelming majorities emphasize the importance of these issues to students.

Truman faculty and staff are in support as well. When asked the same questions given to the students, 77.46 percent of the 71 respondents answered "yes" to the same-sex benefits question, while 78.87 percent answered "yes" to the question regarding the Board's nondiscrimination statement.

If the Board truly wishes to represent the students and faculty they are supposed to be governing over, then they must take this data to heart. The Board may be able to dismiss the opinion of the student body as "naïve" or "uninformed," but they ought not to try to use this argument to discredit our faculty.

Those who opposed the Board changing its nondiscrimination policy claimed we have an "umbrella policy" which eliminates the need for listing particular demographics. If this was even remotely true, then our current policy would not list "race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, or handicap" as protected groups. Some are also concerned that specifically including "sexual orientation" could create a slippery slope whereby other groups demand protected status under the Board's nondiscrimination policy. These concerns are also unfounded. The other dozen or so public schools in Missouri that have already made the decision to include "sexual orientation" have seen no such problems. Truman is currently one of the only public schools left in the state not to have made this change. By comparison, Northwest revised their policy around 1988. It is time for us to catch up with the rest of the state. Further underscoring the opinion of the student body on this issue, Student Senate passed a resolution in support by a vote of 15-0 this past Sunday.

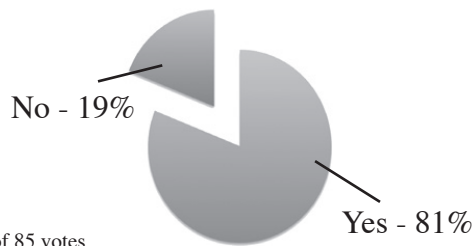
Finally, opponents of same-sex benefits are quick to invoke the Missouri legislature, claiming that these proposals could potentially result in Truman's funding being cut. These threats are baseless. While a couple members of the Missouri legislature are perhaps audacious enough to threaten budget cuts as a punishment for equal benefits, the reality is that the vast majority of the legislature is not nearly this extreme.

Truman is a place of incredible integrity, and to uphold that reputation, we must do the right thing here. We cannot allow ourselves to be blackmailed out of equality by a few extremists in Jefferson City who wish to deny human beings the rights they deserve. Someone has to take a stand here, someone has to take the first step, someone has to do the right thing, and it might as well be us.

Aaron Malin
Sophomore and Student Affairs Chair of Senate

Web Poll

Should the Board of Governors extend equal benefits to same-sex couples?



*out of 85 votes

This week's web poll question:

Should Truman eliminate the sale of bottled water?

Vote online at trumanindex.com

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