

EDITORIAL

Our View

Solving U.S. gun violence requires serious proposals

Legislation has been introduced by Missouri Representative Mike Leara to the Missouri House of Representatives that would make introducing anti-gun legislation into the legislature a felony, according to a Feb. 19 CBS News article. The bill has been twice read, but is yet to be taken to committee, according to the Missouri House of Representatives website. Not only is this proposal ridiculous and entirely unconstitutional, it doesn't foster a sensible discourse about gun rights. Serious, fair and balanced legislation is the path to solving the nation's gun violence problems.

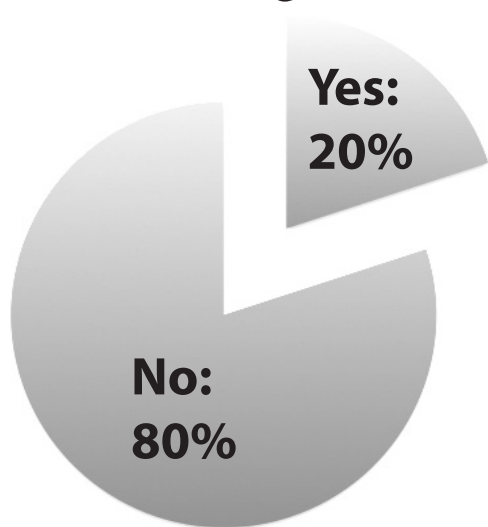
Rep. Leara himself states that he has "no illusions of the bill making it through the legislative process," according to the same CBS News source. If that is the case, why is it being introduced? Instead of threatening his fellow legislators with a Class D Felony, politicians must focus on legislation that would be potentially palatable to both parties.

The notion that the purpose of this bill is to start a discussion is preposterous. Lines in the sand are long-drawn on the issue of gun control. Both parties feel strongly about their positions, as do their constituents. All rational proposals must be on the table, but Leara's proposal is far from rational.

Furthermore, Missouri taxpayers are paying legislators for their efforts. As taxpayers and voters, we demand our legislators take these issues seriously. If legislators want to defend a hunting tradition and truly protect the right to a well-armed militia, then they need to pursue a middle ground, not portray themselves as extremists. We don't know how the issue of gun control will be solved throughout the U.S., but senseless, unconstitutional legislation is not contributing to that solution.

Web Poll

Did you attend Truman State's presentation of The Vagina Monologues?



Out of 15 votes.

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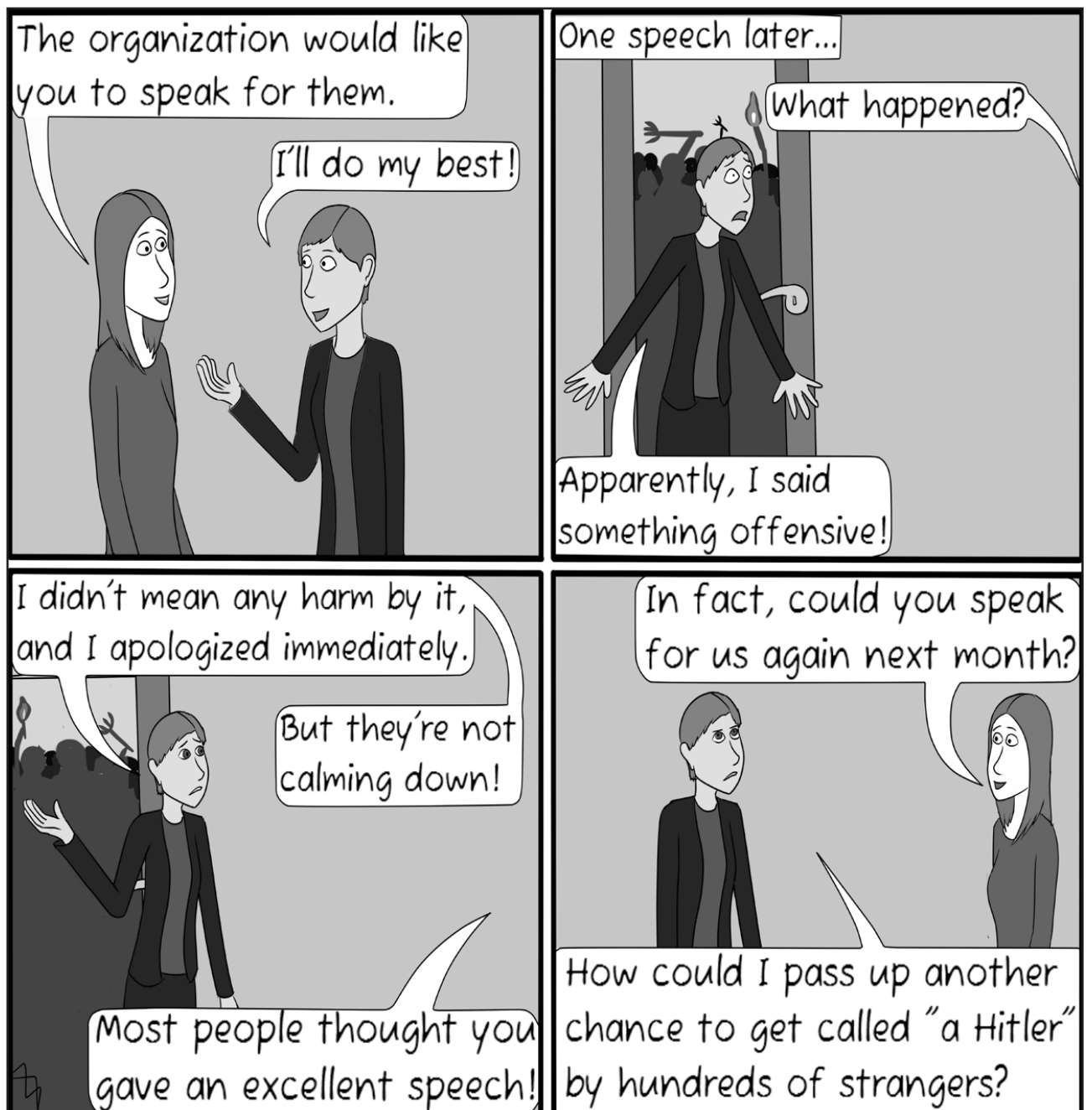
Corrections

Last week's page 16 sports story "McCarroll breaks own shotput record" incorrectly stated that Rachel McCarroll broke the school shotput record. She actually broke her own record in the weight throw.

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please email index.editor@gmail.com, call us at 660-785-4449 or send a letter to Index, 1200 Barnett Hall, Truman State University, Kirksville, Mo., 63501.

Cartoon

By Megan Archer



In defense of offense



Robert Overmann

Most people who know me even remotely know I'm an offensive person. I make off-color jokes, have no qualms with fiercely debating issues among friends and can be brutally insensitive. And no, I have no plans to "tone it down."

We live in a culture of hyper-sensitivity. Everyone who has an image to uphold in the public sphere — whether a public relations representative for a business, a politician or a secondary school teacher — must maintain constant vigilance regarding their own speech and conduct. Offending the wrong individual can result in disciplinary action, job loss or the loss of a political office. Where did we get this culturally-damaging notion that being offended should confer upon us special privilege?

We shouldn't shy from offending or being offended. While that isn't to say we should intentionally offend, offending another is the natural result of supporting an institution or viewpoint they consider distasteful or undeserving of dignity. How can we benefit from a true exchange of ideas if we feel it necessary to censor certain viewpoints from public discourse?

Be grateful to those who have

offended you. Being offended is an emotional response forceful enough to make one reconsider what they hold sacred and why. We cannot hope to learn from others if they constantly reinforce viewpoints we consider unobjectionable. Instead of creating a society where we all feel respected, this phobia of offending is creating a society analogous to gruel — inoffensive and innocuous, but also bland, non-stimulating and intellectually innutritious.

The real issue is not what offends us, but how we respond to the emotion of being offended. When an individual says they've been offended, the immediate response is often for the offender to apologize and end any potentially controversial — and thus meaningful — conversation about the issue. It's perfectly acceptable to voice that one has been offended, but instead of ending the conversation, let's acknowledge that we all come from different backgrounds with different social and cultural norms. We all hold viewpoints that others — somewhere, at some point in time — would consider undignified and revolting.

Consider the constant battle fought between public academic institutions whose library shelves are stocked with books containing the word "n-word." The offended claim that this word, along with these books, should be banned because they're insensitive and offensive. Students typically encounter this word in literature written before the 20th century, often by great authors such as Mark Twain. Surely we all recognize that these works of literature have merit regardless of the potentially offensive diction contained within.

But I'll take it one step further to what might superficially seem a reasonable proposal. What if we were to keep these works of literature on the

shelves and simply black-out potentially offensive words? Surely the word "n-word" itself has no merits justifying its appearance in literature, right?

Wrong. Students are forced to question why the word is used in such a seemingly innocent way in a work of literature. Through this investigation, they gain a better understanding of American history — the cultural history of African-Americans, the socio-political climate of the time period and a sense of how our functional vocabularies have changed throughout the decades and centuries.

This culture of hyper-sensitivity is damaging to democratic governance. Freedom of expression, whether it be through the press or speech, is necessary for a functional democracy. These allow a true "marketplace of ideas" where we're all free to express our thoughts and views. Analogous to a free market economy, ideas selected by a majority survive and become incorporated into our society through laws. When public discourse is limited because an idea is deemed highly offensive, and thus censored, we limit the ideas we, the people, have to select from.

Offense and the ability to offend should be treasured, though used wisely. The ability to offend and be offended shows we are reasoning, compassionate human beings — we each have a sense of dignity and our own moral standards. Simply because another's ideas or expression treads on those standards shouldn't end a conversation — it should be cause to start another.

Robert Overmann is a junior English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.

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 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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