

From the *desk* of the **Editor**

Our View Immunity bill shows respect for human life

A pair of bills introduced to the Missouri House and Senate by Rep. Bryan Spencer (R-63) and Sen. Wayne Wallingford (R-27) would offer some immunity to possessors of illegal drugs when they report an overdose.

We, the Index Editorial Board, would like to express our support for such a measure. No person deserves to die from a drug overdose — especially not because a potential reporter is too afraid of legal ramifications after contacting emergency response personnel. However, we disagree with some of the bills' limitations.

"Under this act, a person shall not be charged or prosecuted for possession of a controlled substance or an imitation controlled substance under certain circumstances if, while acting in good faith, such person seeks or obtains emergency medical assistance for someone experiencing a controlled substance overdose," according to Missouri S.B. 831 and H.B. 1516.

This law, however, offers only limited immunity, as it places limits on possession amounts of various controlled substances. If the reporter of the crime possesses more than the amount of a particular drug, as specified by the bill, immunity would not apply.

We think this qualifier to the law weakens the bills' impact. Whether the reporter possesses 2.5 grams cocaine, or whether they possess 4 grams of cocaine should not prevent the victim of an overdose from receiving help. As long as the individual does not possess enough of a drug to be a candidate for drug trafficking charges, we think the life of a human being outweighs any state interests in prosecuting drug possessors.

However, if an individual could be prosecuted with drug trafficking charges, this indicates they might be distributing a substance which could adversely impact dozens or more lives. This, we think, is a strong enough state interest that immunity should not be granted for drug trafficking charges — for instance, if the possessor is caught with 30 or more grams of heroin, 30 kilograms or more of marijuana or 500 milligrams or more of LSD.

We would like to applaud Wallingford and Spencer for their proposed bills, but think these bills should grant greater immunity from drug possession charges. The reporting of an overdose, and thus saving an individual's life, should not hinge on such arbitrarily low possession limits.

Professors should not self-promote among students



Emily Battmer
Editor-in-Chief

The other day, I noticed a friend of mine scouring his professor's personal website. I made a joke, asking if he was trying to get on the professor's good side.

"No — this is my homework assignment," he told me. He said the professor had just published a new book and assigned his entire class to read about the book's release online.

This wasn't the first assignment of its kind, as my friend elaborated. He told me about the professor's several appearances at campus events and various media, which the professor required my friend's class to attend, read or listen to for homework or extra credit.

Not only do these so-called "assignments" contribute nothing to student learning, they are a blatant abuse of the professor's power over students. I was appalled, but these abuses of power are not uncommon. It might not always be as obvious as this professor's case, but I have had several classes with professors who prefer to use lecture time as their own show-and-tell, plugging their accomplishments or telling stories about their glory days before they became professors at Truman State.

I appreciate those educators who try to make meaningful connections with students using the occasional personal anecdote, or those who offer practical examples and helpful insight from their own real-world experiences. But too often, I find myself losing focus or dozing off during class when the lecture veers to irrelevant topics.

Truman boasts about its 16:1 student-to-faculty ratio, but small class size means nothing when the "one" in that ratio isn't looking out for his or her 16 students. Professors at Truman generally are knowledgeable about their fields — as students paying tuition to the University, we deserve professors' best efforts to convey that knowledge. As the future leaders of our chosen fields, it is imperative professors use each class period for meaningful instruction, not shameless self-promotion.

Emily Battmer is a senior communication major from Kansas City, Mo.



Letters to the Editor

We aren't asking the right question about religion and gay rights

As a journalist, the First Amendment is my best friend and sometimes my only defender. I cherish our relationship and the strength it has given me in my writing and reporting.

Not only do I hold dear the freedom of the press and speech, but also freedom to exercise religion and the right of assembly and petition.

As a practicing Catholic, which seems rare for a college student nowadays, I take my beliefs seriously. My beliefs tell me homosexuality is a sin.

I can bet your first reaction was one of two things: "She is a religious fanatic who is anti-gay rights. Ugh!" or ... "She is a strong Christian who isn't afraid to share her beliefs. Bravo!"

For now, let's move on. We will come back to this later. Please stay with me. I promise this will all make sense.

There has been uproar about several states passing legislation that would allow businesses to discriminate against LGBTQ people for religious reasons. As I am from Kansas, the legislation in Kansas is what caught my eye first. House Bill 2453 is an act "concerning religious freedoms with respect to marriage," according to the official bill.

People like to pick out two parts of the two-and-a-half-page bill. First, the bill states the government would not require any individual or religious entity provide services, facilities, goods, social services or employment related to any marriage or domestic partnership, or the celebration of such, if it contradicts "sincerely held religious beliefs." Many people see this as a sheer discrimination and a way for bigots to "get away with" discriminatory or hateful acts through a crock excuse of "sincere religious beliefs."

The second part of the bill that people pull is that religious beliefs would be a defense for any civil action taken against a person or religious entity involved with a discrimination lawsuit. This is seen as protection for those bigots who would refuse service to LGBTQ people out of hatred.

But, this discussion was quickly turned into a game of telephone. The things I heard about this bill when I first learned about it are the things that I said many people would think in the sections above. I agreed with those people. I couldn't understand why Kansas would even introduce such objectionable legislation. Discrimination of any sort is not okay. Then I actually read the bill. Which I guarantee about 1 percent of people talking about the bill did.

I read things the media or my friends weren't talking about or maybe even didn't know about. In the first section of the bill, where it talks about the refusal of services, it also states individuals or religious entities solemnize or treat any marriage or domestic partnership or civil union as valid. And while I personally agree with marriage equality ("marriage" in the U.S. is just a piece of paper for the government, marriage in Christianity isn't about a government document), I can understand the hesitation for some religious organizations to extend that benefit. Catholic churches shouldn't be forced to perform a ceremony between LGBTQ people or face civil action if they refuse.

The other part people aren't talking about is that if an individual in a non-religious organization invokes the protections provided in the first section of the bill, the organization itself would still need to make sure the service is provided.

This bill was passed in the Kansas House of Representatives, but voted down in the Senate.

I'm not here to tell you whether the bill was right or wrong, because I can see and understand both sides of the argument. I am a Catholic who has a gay brother, whom I love and care for deeply and would never want to be discriminated against. What I want to point out is that there is a middle ground in this issue where many people stand.

This is the most polarizing issue in my short lifetime. You are either a religious nut or left-wing crazy. A bigot or a sinner.

All this hatred is spewing from both sides. The vocal extremists on both sides are trying to suppress and condemn what the other is doing.

So where does that leave people like me? The people who understand both sides. The people who support parts of each side. The people in the middle.

We are ignored or marginalized by the vocal extremists. No one can hear our reason above their shouting. And when we are heard, we are vilified. Guilt by association. Some vocal Catholics spurn me for not expressing damnation toward homosexuals. Pro-gay right activists despise me for defending others' religious freedoms and beliefs.

In a recent article about this issue in the Washington Post, Douglas Laycock, a professor at University of Virginia School of Law said, "Both gay rights and religious liberty people want rights for their side but not for the other."

I think we should take a moment to step back from the issues at hand. Look at the opinions from an eagle's eye view. Maybe the rhetoric shouldn't be right and wrong. Maybe the rhetoric should be acceptance.

Kate Linman
Truman State senior

Leave Kirksville a better place by voting

I am a permanent resident of Kirksville and I would like to encourage all Truman students to register to vote in Adair county and vote in our local elections. Truman is a big part of Kirksville and the students are, even for just 4 years, members of our community. You are affected by our laws, streets, public facilities, businesses, utilities, and countless other ways. I want your voice to be heard. I want you to leave your mark on this town. Yes, you will move on, but other students will replace you. Help leave Kirksville a better place for them.

I strongly disagree with any suggestion that Truman students avoid local elections because they may not be living here in 20 years. I've lived here for almost 22 years and I would hate to see what Kirksville might be like without being invigorated by our student body.

This past summer, students, faculty, and hundreds of permanent residents pulled together to pass a nondiscrimination ordinance in the city of Kirksville. This was made possible by the influence of just a couple of hundred students voting

in the last city council election. Electing the people who supported equality. Now we need all of you to vote to keep this ordinance safe.

The election in April will have people running for city council who want to dismantle, or completely get rid of, that nondiscrimination ordinance. At a council study session in August, I heard councilmen who said that Truman students didn't matter, that they are not going to guide the "values" of Kirksville, and that they don't vote anyway. When a supportive councilman pointed out the importance of Truman to Kirksville, another member replied: "What are they going to do? Pack up and move?!" If you are offended by this attitude, then get out and vote in Adair County. You can register on line in a snap at www.sos.mo.gov. You can also get an absentee ballot in case you might not be around on Election Day. Register, vote, participate, and be heard.

Sherri Palmer
Truman State psychology professor

Contact

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