

Our View Index board recommends voting “no”

Four statewide issues will appear on the ballot this upcoming Nov. 4 General Election. The ballot measures are potential revisions to the state’s constitution. We, the Index Editorial Board, urge readers to vote against all four ballot initiatives.

The Amendment 2 ballot reads, “Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended so that it will be permissible to allow relevant evidence of prior criminal acts to be admissible in prosecutions for crimes of a sexual nature involving a victim under eighteen years of age?” This amendment would allow “evidence of prior criminal acts, charged or uncharged, to be considered by courts in prosecutions of sexual crimes that involve a victim under eighteen years of age,” according to the ballot language.

Because prior uncharged acts are unproven and have not been considered by a court of law prior to the proceeding in which they would be used as evidence, we fear this would create a “trial within a trial” — where a defendant would have to account for a charge they are facing other than the charge they are on trial for. This propensity evidence also could prejudice a jury against a defendant. An “estimate” of the likelihood that the defendant committed the crime based on a prior charge is too weak to count as evidence in a criminal trial.

Amendment 3 would implement performance evaluations for Missouri teachers tied to their compensation and job security, as well as limit collective bargaining rights of teachers.

For teachers to educate as professionals, they should be treated as such in their classrooms. While we agree that teachers should be evaluated, we think this is excessive and would discourage good teachers from teaching underprivileged students. Since underprivileged students chronically underperform other students, we worry that teachers of underprivileged students would be punished for their hard work. Teachers also should retain collective bargaining rights as a check against unfair and burdensome administrative policy.

Amendment 6 would limit early voting to “a period of six business days prior to and including the Wednesday before the Election Day in all general elections.” We think this is an attempt to confuse Missouri voters, and is a weak answer to Missouri’s citizen-led Early Voting petition. Polling places in many states are open before and after regular business hours, and many states offer voting during weekends and through mail-in ballots. The amendment would not allow polling places to open on weekends, and would require voting to take place during regular business hours, according to an Oct. 4 Kansas City Star editorial.

Amendment 10 would require the governor to pay the state’s debt, and would prevent the governor from estimating state revenues when making budget recommendations to the legislature in certain situations, and limit the governor’s decisions to withhold funds.

We think the amendment would curtail an important ability of the governor to withhold funds from the budget, and might prevent the governor from planning for and dealing with a revenue shortfall. The amendment also could lead to Missouri losing its AAA credit rating, according to an Oct. 16 St. Louis Post Dispatch editorial.

We urge voters to vote “no” on all statewide ballot measures during the Nov. 4 General Election for the reasons enumerated above. While amendments to the state’s constitution can help the state adapt to changing times, we think these amendments are not the sort of change that would take Missouri in the right direction.

Letters to the Editor

Truman’s impaired vision: Blinded from a population battling addiction

Students, faculty and staff are invited to attend a student-initiated education campaign next week, Nov. 3-7. Sponsored by Student Government and Preferred Family Healthcare, the campaign, “Addiction Hurts,” will discuss alcoholism and addiction as important mental health issues with a prevention workshop, art display and online campaign.

Truman students often consider substance dependence as irrelevant on campus because we fail to relate with the issue. Many are afraid, unaware or unsympathetic to the “junkies” living on the streets. And why should Truman’s Student Government support a cause that does not directly impact students?

According to the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, approximately 17 million adults 18 and older had an alcohol use disorder. Additionally concerning, an estimated 23.1 million Americans needed treatment for a problem related to drugs or alcohol, but only one out of every 10 received treatment at a specialty facility.

While the statistics are shocking, it is essential for students to understand addiction is not a simple “problem” remedied with a budget for spreading a “Just Say No” mentality. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5), used by clinicians and researchers, actually classifies substance dependence as a mental disorder.

Students cannot afford to simply write off the issues of addiction and alcoholism. We cannot continue to associate addiction and alcoholism only with the homeless and drastically low-income, uneducated populations. We cannot continue to refer to a large portion of Kirksville’s population as “meth heads.”

We all must begin to recognize it is our responsibility to enact policies, supply funding and support recovery programs, treatment facilities and educational prevention programs. We are tomorrow’s civic leaders that must face the damage of addiction and alcoholism in our culture.

Truman’s official vision states: “Truman will demonstrate its public liberal arts and sciences mission by developing educated citizens ... through transformative experiences

that foster ... empathetic understanding of human experiences at home and around the world.”

Our current environment inhibits achieving such a vision unless we take advantage of learning opportunities, which inspire empathy with unfamiliar populations. A week of events to increase awareness of addiction gives the University an opportunity to pursue its own vision through education on substance dependent populations.

To actively pursue Truman’s mission, attend the Nov. 5 workshop, view the weeklong art show, stop by the “Addiction Hurts” table, or even get involved online.

The mental disorders of drug and alcohol addiction are not only found amongst the nation’s homeless, but in our hometowns, neighborhoods, and cul-de-sacs. Collectively, we must be willing to look ahead and recognize empathy for each individual’s struggle is a necessity for future leadership. For more information or to attend an “Addiction Hurts” event, visit jessiepoole06.wix.com/addictionhurts.

Jessie Poole
Truman State senior

Be respectful and don’t focus on blame

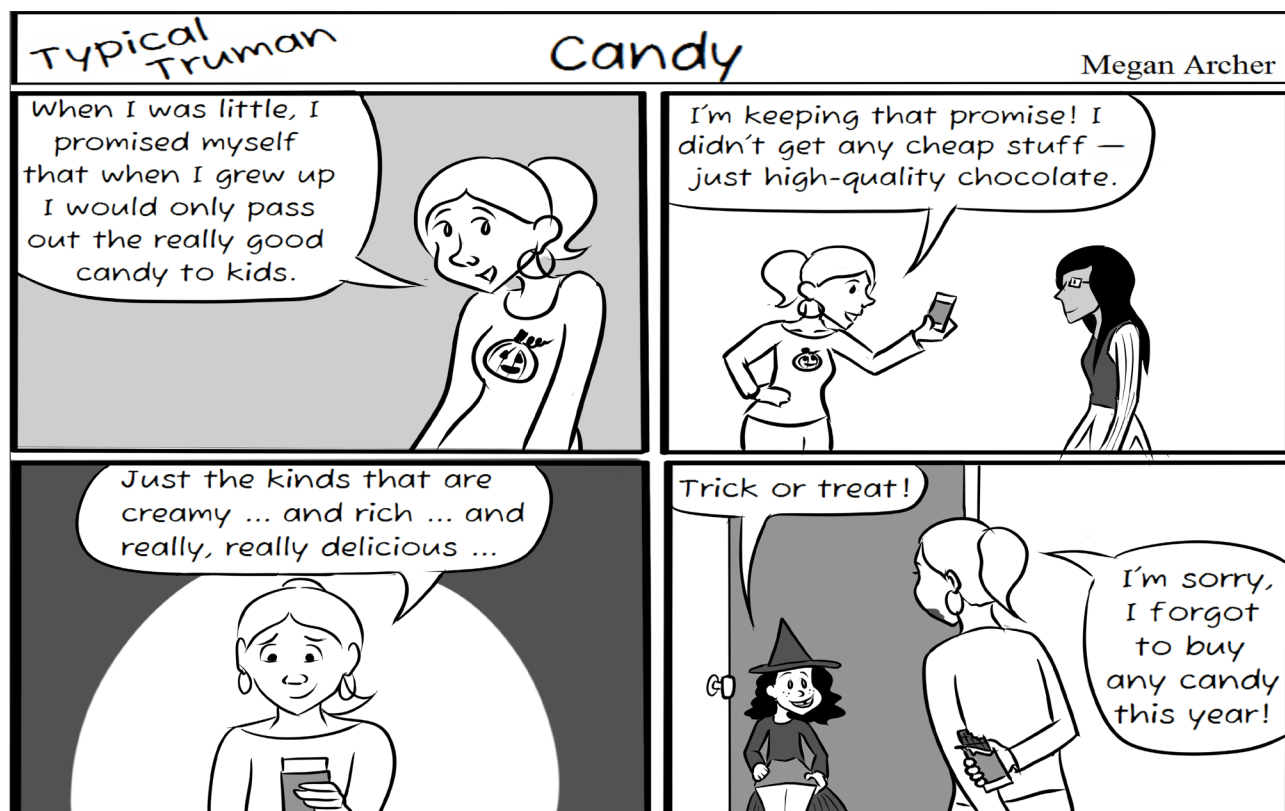
As someone who personally knew Connor Cunningham, I was extremely saddened to hear of his tragic death last weekend. I became even more upset, however, when I looked at [a local news source’s] story to find more information and discovered a heated conversation in the comments over who was to blame for the accident. Several Kirksville citizens went so far as to indicate that the accident must have been Cunningham’s fault, citing anecdotes about Truman State students who fearlessly dart in front of cars.

Never mind that during my time at Truman I was almost hit by several speeding cars while walking in a crosswalk in broad daylight, this response sickens me beyond belief. I do not intend to say this was the driver’s fault. We still don’t know many of the facts surrounding

the case, but the one fact we do know is this — a young man lost his life in an incredibly tragic way, dying many, many years before he should have. That the response of some members of the community he chose to live in for what should have been the next four years of his life was to publicly blame him for the accident is disgusting and appalling, particularly when so much is still unknown.

I hate to think of Connor Cunningham’s friends or family reading the same comments I did, and I hope they did not. One would hope that in a senseless tragedy such as this, everyone would have the restraint of most people, acknowledge this was an awful situation, and respect the pain of everyone involved. But I suppose that would be too much to ask.

Kirk Schlueter
Truman State alumnus



Eyewitness accounts can be unreliable



Sarah Muir

Ferguson refuses to fade from the news cycle. A new autopsy report appears to confirm the account of Darren Wilson, the officer who shot unarmed black teenager Michael Brown, according to an Oct. 23 Time article.

This raises questions about the validity of the eyewitness accounts and the necessity of the protests. The lessons to take away from the new autopsy report are that even though eyewitness testimony should not be blindly trusted, the protestors have a reason for protesting even if Wilson’s account of the incident is correct.

First, eyewitness testimony is notoriously unreliable. Eyewitness testimony is not a good indication of what transpired because it is malleable, according to an Aug. 20 Science of Us article. Media can change what people

thought they saw — the more something is in the media the more likely it is that it will affect the testimony, according to the Science of Us article. This is particularly problematic in Ferguson, since the event has been all across the media.

Moreover, eyewitness testimony can be affected by pre-existing biases within the viewer, according to the Science of Us article. So if Person A inherently distrusts the police, Person A is more likely to recall a version of events that fits with that bias. Conversely, if Person B supports the police and distrusts youth, that person will be more likely to recall a version of events that confirms their bias.

Further complicating matters, the presence of a weapon makes eyewitness accounts even more unreliable, according to the Science of Us article. Referred to as “weapon focus,” the presence of a weapon makes the viewers fixate on the weapon and pay less attention to the events occurring, according to the Science of Us article. Since there was a weapon involved, we can expect that the accounts of Ferguson are going to be pretty unreliable.

This does not mean the protests have been unwarranted, though. Even if Wilson’s account of the shooting is completely true, there still is an underlying problem that the protestors have been fighting against

— the problem of the police targeting black teens. Even if Ferguson isn’t an example of one of these incidents, it does provide an opening for a public awareness of this issue.

Black teens are 21 times more likely to be shot and killed by police officers than white teens, according to an Oct. 10 Vox article. The differences in the numbers are incredible and more than prove the existence of the problem. That isn’t going to be solved just because the autopsy report shows there might have been a struggle before Wilson shot Brown.

This disparity is the real issue underneath the protests in Ferguson. Minorities are being targeted and the tragedy of the shooting of Michael Brown has provided an opportunity to rebel against this system. Ferguson isn’t an isolated event and that’s the problem.

The protests in Ferguson are only expected to get worse if Wilson isn’t indicted, according to an Oct. 24 CNN article. Wilson is just a stand-in for the larger problem. If we are interested in really creating change, the focus should be shifted from Ferguson as one specific event to Ferguson as just one more example of how racism is alive and well.

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Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the academic 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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