

Our View

The Missouri State legislature recently passed Senate Bill 656 over Governor Nixon's veto, which lowers the requirements for carrying concealed firearms. SB 656 removes the firearm training, education and background check requirements that were previously in place, includes a "stand your ground" provision, lowers the legal carrying age to 19 and creates a special kind of permit that is valid for life. Earlier versions of this bill would have allowed concealed weapons on college campuses, but SB 656 exempts universities from most of these changes.

We, the Truman Media Network Editorial Board, oppose this bill, which will go into effect Jan. 1, 2017. Supporters of the legislation argue it is a necessary protection of Second Amendment rights, and we agree that these rights are important for our democracy. However, there are restrictions on nearly every Constitutional right, including the Second Amendment. We believe the eight-hour training courses provide essential information to those who wish to carry lethal weapons, especially the technical use of weapons and when it is justified to open fire on another human being. Furthermore, eliminating the background check step allows people who have pled guilty to felonies, as well as people who have been convicted of misdemeanor assault, to carry concealed firearms. Only a small part of the population will be excluded from carrying, which means anyone in a public place could be surrounded with weapons — without their knowledge.

The "stand your ground" provision is also worrisome, allowing a person to use their firearm if they feel reasonably threatened. Actions that count as threatening vary from person to person, and we believe this kind of legal protection might justify future tragedies. One well-publicized use of the "stand your ground" defense was the shooting of Trayvon Martin in 2012, whose killer was not convicted of murder.

We, the Truman Media Network Editorial Board, encourage students and other members of the Truman community to remain aware of this legislation and stay politically engaged. When this bill began its journey through the House and Senate last semester, our campus was in an uproar. We discussed and debated its potential consequences on Yik Yak, in the student media, a public debate and a forum organized by Student Senate, which was one of the most well-attended Student Senate forums in its organizers' memory. But after summer, the conversation



nearly died, even though the bill was entering its most important legislative steps. Truman students should organize more forums and debates to keep the discussion going in addition to other forms of political action — from voting to demonstrations. The current bill's most significant ef-

fect on our campus is lowering the legal concealed carry age from 21 to 19, meaning a majority of Truman students could carry while off-campus. However, if a future bill were to allow weapons on campus, as some current legislators wish, we should be informed and ready.

Health class should teach about rehabilitation



Trista Sullivan

Throughout my time in the public school system and bleeding slightly into my college experience, I have been required to take a number of health classes. While it is very important to start these classes at a young age, there are some dangers in teaching about drugs and drug abuse without connecting those conversations to drug rehabilitation and the health care that is accessible to drug addicts. To me, it has always seemed that the teachers have gone over the details of the drugs, be it chemical make up, the effects they have on the mind and body, and the negative health and wellness consequences that come from using these illicit drugs. That's where the lessons end.

Don't get me wrong — I'm a huge advocate for teaching the dangers of drug abuse. I believe more education on drugs and drug abuse will lead to a fewer amount of drug users. D.A.R.E. aside — which has varying levels of success for different people — there are correct and effective ways to educate the masses about the dangers of substance abuse, but we need to do more than just teach the negative effects of drugs. We need to educate students about how other developed nations handle drug abuse in the justice system and in the healthcare. In the U.S. we more often criminalize our drug users than we treat them medically or attempt to rehabilitate them. The Bureau of Prisons reports 48.6 percent of individuals jailed in federal prisons and about 16 percent of those jailed in state prisons were sentenced for drug offenses.

It wasn't until taking a Global Issues class here at Truman that I even considered the intricacies of the politics of health care regarding and surrounding drug addicts and their access to these resources. I had never considered the differences between treating drug addicts like criminals and treating drug addicts like patients in need of critical health care. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports on the costs of substance abuse that is broken up into three categories of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. From here it breaks up what costs come out of health care overall.

According to NIDA, the combination of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs cost the nation \$166 billion in healthcare. This is out of a total of \$700 billion spent annually in costs related to crime, lost work and healthcare. Only 23 percent of our nation's spending in substance abuse costs is toward healthcare. I find this absolutely ridiculous.

I believe that a large part of the stigmatization of drug abusers as criminals rather than individuals in need of healthcare is partly attributed to our lack of education about rehabilitation. In addition to this, the policies we use against drug use need to be studied and taught in schools to help develop a more in-depth and rounded understanding of drug abuse and how our lawmakers attempt to control it. Like many social and political trends throughout the globe, we need to follow the leaders in this situation, like Switzerland, Finland and other European countries. We need to start sending substance abusers to hospitals rather than to jails — to spend federal dollars on healthcare and rehabilitation rather than on beds and prison quotas.

Trista Sullivan is a senior sociology major from St. Louis, Mo.

Living alone has unexpected benefits



Trevor Hamblin

I don't have a roommate this semester. That might sound like a simple fact, but for me it's a very personal and very important change in my life. I grew up with a twin brother — since I was born I've had to share my room and living space with another human being. So living with a roommate changed very little about how I approached privacy and my living space — well, beyond further segmentation and some re-learning of boundaries and schedules.

With my roommate gone for personal reasons, I now have the room to myself. And as an introvert, it's amaz-

ing. There's a lot of relief that comes from simply having the option to lock my door, a luxury I have never had before — it allows for an expectation of privacy, and it means I can have complete comfort that isn't at the expense of my roommate.

Of course this means a few things are standard to living alone for the first time — pants and headphones are optional, my sleeping patterns are known only to me and eating at odd hours isn't as frowned upon — mostly because there's no one to do the frowning. But for me, the real irony is I have actually been sleeping at better hours, consistently so, than when I ever had a roommate. Granted, my roommate last year was also notoriously bad with sleep schedules. It was such an immediate response to getting here that I can't help but point it out — during the summer I was going to bed at four or five in the morning, but the second I got here and settled in, I was going to bed while the time was still in double-digits.

All of that said, the biggest downside is I don't have anyone to help remind me to study or do homework. Time management has never been an area I've excelled in, and not having another person in the room to even passively remind me — by doing his homework, he reminded me to do mine — has changed how I approach time manage-

ment. I'm definitely going to have to put in more effort to keep myself on task, and getting help with my studying is definitely going to be a problem.

There's also the problem of how this affects my social life. Not only did I lose the roommate I'd spent significant time and emotional investment in, I also have two new suitemates who I don't know very well and don't always have the emotional energy to get to know. With all the other people I knew on my floor having moved as well, I also have to spend more effort to keep in contact with people, another skill I have never really had. Hopefully the necessity to develop this skill will finally push me to do so.

I really do enjoy having a room to myself. It's nice and quiet and I don't worry as much about disrupting others. And I have the ability to just be comfortable with myself and my solitude. But it is a major change in my life that is going to require effort on my part to maintain. At the very least, that can be considered a good thing.

Trevor Hamblin is a junior English and communication major from Moberly, Mo.

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