



'[A flu vaccination is] just one shot for man, one giant leap for public health.'

Howard Koh, Massachusetts public health commissioner

The Gamecock

Serving the Carolina Community since 1908

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Intra-campus mail fees not acceptable

For most students, sending intra-campus mail is as easy as dropping it into any "Campus Mail" slot. But for student organizations, sending out mailings on campus comes at a steep price.

Organizations sending out more than 25 pieces of campus mail at one time must pay a \$25 fee, and they must also get approval from the Campus Activities Center and the USC post office.

For most organizations, from the largest clubs on campus to the fledgling clubs with very small budgets, this can be not only a major inconvenience, but also in some cases, an impossibility. And the money can add up quickly for those organizations that rely heavily on sending mailings to their members to keep them updated.

According to Ladonna Moss, USC Postal Services director, the cost is used to help Postal Services offset the labor cost to distribute the mail. But considering the extensive amount of mail that on-campus students send and receive daily, why charge organizations to send out sporadic bulk mailings?

And while e-mail would be a cheaper way for a club to contact its members, not everybody is fortunate enough to have an e-mail account he can check on a consistent basis.

Postal Services and the Division of Student and Alumni Affairs should re-evaluate the fairness of requiring organizations to go through such a process to send bulk campus mail. After all, most organizations can find a better, more productive way to spend \$25 and their time.

Prayer before games unconstitutional

Public prayer over the public-address system before a university sporting event has become an all-too-common practice at USC. While some students might argue that it's the only thing that can save USC's football team right now, prayer has no place in the stadiums and coliseums of a public institution.

In the first place, from a legal standpoint, prayer in these areas violates the concept of separation of church and state.

While the general public might support the idea of an invocation, if that invocation were represented by a Hebrew blessing or Muslim prayer, chances are the prayer wouldn't be as well-received.

But even on a more pragmatic level, it's hard to believe that anyone's god could possibly invest very much interest in human sporting events. Supreme Beings, whether they exist or not, should have to worry about far too many other pressing issues, such as nuclear meltdowns, devastating earthquakes and hurricane flooding, to be concerned with the outcome of a college football game.

And assuming such a Supreme Being should somehow find the time to watch SportsCenter, would he or she really choose sides?

If so, is God a Yankees or an Indians fan? Does he or she pull for the Bulls or the Jazz?

And if you really want a someone to miss a free throw, shouldn't you pray to Satan instead of God?

Not only is prayer before public college athletic events unconstitutional, but it's nonsensical.

ABOUT US

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Letters to the editor or guest columns are welcome from all members of the Carolina community. Letters should be 250-300 words. Guest columns should be an opinion piece of about 600-700 words.

Both must include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. Handwritten submissions must be personally delivered to Russell House room 333. E-mail submissions must include telephone number for confirmation. The Gamecock reserves the right to edit for libel, style and space. Anonymous letters will not be published. Photos are required for guest columnist and can be provided by the submitter. Call 777-7226 for more information.

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NATIONAL ISSUES

Atomic age brings responsibilities

Smart parents who have a small child and a gun in the same house will take the time to make sure that child is trained in gun safety. But a child is still a child, and even a well-trained one will still be admonished for playing with a gun.

The more information I hear about the nuclear accident in Japan last week, the more I can't help but think about a child waving a gun at his friend, not realizing it's loaded, about to pull the trigger jokingly and shout "bang!"

Again, the world is watching a nuclear disaster that could have easily been averted.

The culprit this time, depending on whom you ask, is either JCO Co. Ltd., the operator of the Japanese uranium processing facility, or operator error. Or both.

JCO admitted Saturday that it illegally modified a government-approved manual.

Included in the modification was a provision to allow workers to omit key safety steps, resulting in uranium being poured directly into a safety basin.

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Operator error factored in when the workers mistakenly added nearly eight times the maximum amount of 2.4 kilograms of uranium.

The resulting chain reaction forced evacuation of a 350-meter radius surrounding the plant and caused a government official to remark: "We are seeing a blue glow, which is something we have never seen before."

While Japan promises a "strict investigation," the entire globe scratches its collective head and wonders, "How could someone be so lax about something so serious? Do they understand how important this is?"

I can think of few things that are as potentially lethal to life on this planet as the improper handling of radioactive materials.

And this is not the first large-scale nuclear accident. The United States suffered its high-profile accident in March 1979, when the Three Mile Island reactor teetered on the brink of full-scale meltdown. In April 1986, the Chernobyl reactor underwent a series of explosions during a test, resulting in more than 75 million people being exposed to dangerously high levels of radiation.

In each case, misinterpretations, misunderstandings and slow emergency response to the situation expounded the problems to catastrophic levels.

For their parts, both the United States and Russia have undertaken complete overhauls of their respective nuclear programs to prevent similar accidents.

But the pattern here is unsettling. Must each nuclear-powered country have a serious accident in order to understand the seriousness of the technology they are attempting to harness?

Again, I am reminded of the child with the gun pointed at his friend, and the parents who could prevent the disaster with education and supervision.

Now there are three of us "parent countries" who have all felt the pain of an unfortunate accident. It is up to us to educate and supervise these countries. We can't simply give them a gun and a manual on how to use it; we must oversee each facet of the development of this still-new industry in each country that wishes to use it.

We have seen the havoc misuse can wreak—in some parts of the world, chicken Kiev can still be used as a nightlight. We must take this burden on our shoulders, even though it is yet another burden we must bear, because this is an issue of such importance.

The future of our race could depend on it.

LETTERS

Senator opposes Safe Ride proposal

To the Editor:

I am a senator representing the law school. Should legislation authorizing Safe Ride come to the student senate floor, I will vote against it. The reasons for my decision are:

- Unnecessary liability: Simply stated, I believe the university will expose itself to a potentially large amount of tort liability should it assume the responsibility of carting around people in various states of drunkenness. I believe my constituents are already paying high enough tuition—why make them pay more to subsidize the judgments and settlements against the university that might ultimately come as a product of this program?

- Safe Ride creates the impression that the university condones underage drinking: Because Safe Ride shuttles are slated to run from locations on campus to Five Points, the folks who will more than likely be using the service will be on campus students. I believe it is fair to say that (a) the majority of students living on-campus are under the age of 21, and (b) the overwhelming majority of places operating in Five Points at night are in the exclusive business of selling alcohol. Taking these points together, I do not understand how the university can operate Safe Ride without creating the impression that it facilitates (i.e. supports) underage drinking. I would prefer the university not engage in crafting this message.

- Burdensome expense: When you consider the costs associated with operating Safe Ride (e.g. employing drivers, insurance, gas, wear and tear on university vehicles), it seems ambitious of the program's advocates to say that Safe Ride can be operated on only \$200 a night. I believe

additional analysis will show the costs to be greater. I can think many other ways my constituents would like to see their student activities fees spent (i.e. more money for organizations like the Student Bar Association, NAACP, fraternity/sorority service projects, etc. and less money for driving around drunk).

I greatly respect the student leaders who are developing solutions to combat drinking and driving. Nevertheless, I believe that Safe Ride is a program with negatives that far outweigh its positives. Accordingly, I encourage my fellow senators to abandon Safe Ride and work toward creating feasible anti-drinking-and-driving programs, as well as strengthening existing efforts, such as GAMMA, to keep the student body safe.

Christian Stegmaier
Third-year law student

Column distorts Newsweek article

To the Editor:

I am writing to answer some of Emily Streyer's open-ended questions in her column "Computers no substitute for M.D.s" [Oct. 1]. Her first question was, "A prognosis calculator?"

Yes, Emily, a prognosis calculator. Well, not exactly. According to the Newsweek article that you hastily misrepresented, "The program doesn't just enhance their efficiency. As Slawson's experience suggests, it can improve their decisions."

InfoRetriever includes all of the latest findings in many of the top medical journals and digests, along with hundreds drawn from other reliable sources, and the whole program can be updated quarterly through Internet downloads. Sorry, Emily, it does-

n't pick your lotto numbers for you; it's not really a calculator.

Now to the second question: "Have these doctors set up practice in a 'Star Trek' episode?" No, Emily, it is called getting the latest pertinent information to doctors quickly to save lives and lessen mistakes.

According to the Newsweek article, "Medicine has gotten too complex to practice from a dog-eared textbook. Fortunately, there is now an alternative. InfoRetriever and other portable databases won't make doctors obsolete. But doctors who lack them may soon be just that."

The other questions: "What are the chances of an 'otherwise healthy' woman, in no immediate danger, dying anyway, either at home or in a hospital? Is the multiplier 2.2 really a significant case?" Well, to answer question A: no, a healthy woman would probably not be at the doctor's office, and there would not be the debate to check her into the hospital.

As you failed to mention in your column, the patient was suffering from pneumonia, and her regular doctor thought checking her into a hospital, where germs are rampant, would be a bad idea for a woman in her condition. Yes, if I was told being somewhere would make me more than two times likely to die, I think it would be significant enough for me to go somewhere else.

At no point was InfoRetriever used for diagnosis in place of a doctor. In the future, when summarizing Newsweek articles, please read them first.

John Mangione
Sociology Junior

STATE ISSUES

Vote Yes proponents pervert poker issue

Video poker. Two words that seem to appear together on the editorial pages of countless newspapers across South Carolina every day. The issues behind video poker have been confused so much that the average South Carolinian doesn't know how to think about the issue or how to vote Nov. 2.

The confusion comes from the closest thing South Carolina has to an organized mafia—the gambling "industry"—and from politicians on both sides.

See, when we elected Gov. Jim "traffic jam" Hodges, we did so with the hope that he would bring South Carolinians a lottery so South Carolina's best and brightest could go to state-supported colleges and universities for free.

Hodges won't bring us a lottery during his term, and chances are the next governor won't, either.

It would require a constitutional amendment to legally have a lottery in this state.

Do you know how long it will be before we have enough bipartisan support for a lottery in the House and Senate? Let's just say Satan will be wearing a scarf.

The issue that won Hodges the governorship—the lottery—has conveniently been put on the back burner in favor of video poker.

Perhaps this is because Hodges wants to downplay the lottery because he knows it is impossible to gain the constitutional amendment necessary to implement it. Or, perhaps it's because he was never in favor of it in the first place.

Truth is, organized gambling (video poker included) is supposed to be illegal in South Carolina. The only reason video poker machines and "casinos" deface nearly every exit on our interstates and nearly every filling station from Charleston to Spartanburg is a clandestine attachment that slipped into a bill years ago. Pretty slick, huh?

Now there are all the bright yellow signs screaming "Vote yes!" that dot the highways, claiming that if we vote to keep video poker, car taxes will magically disappear, our children will magically be smart and our freedom to put entire paychecks into a machine programmed to make money for the gaming "industry" will be protected.

Since when has money from the video poker industry gone to education? What proof does the Vote Yes campaign have that by keeping video poker, car taxes will be slashed?

And then, there are those close to the gaming "industry" who are fearful of the people's voice, and for good reason. A recent poll showed that 71 percent of "likely voters" would vote to ban video poker. Allen Mashburn, operations manager for Leisure Time Inc., a company that distributes video poker machines, told a colleague of mine something that goes against what this country is founded on—the citizens' will.

"We elected officials to make decisions. If they turn over every controversial vote to the people, then we don't need them," Mashburn said.

Now, if the politicians aren't sure of what their constituents want, I'd rather they send the vote to the people than have them make blind guesses or vote with the opinion of the highest-paying lobby.

Earlier in conversation with my friend and colleague, Mashburn said: "People have the right to choose." The irony is so thick, you can cut it with a knife.

So keep in mind that if you are pro-lottery (like myself), voting no on Nov. 2 will not affect the chances of getting a lottery in South Carolina.

It'll be awhile before we have one, anyway.

Also, keep in mind that voting yes won't affect the progress on getting a lottery, either.

It will only bring more and more burntsienna buildings with purple neon signs saying "adult video games" farther off the interstate and closer to your home.



Clayton Kale
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