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VIEWPOINTS

ONLINE POLL

Which No. 1 seed will advance the farthest in the men's NCAA Tournament?
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Results published on Fridays.

IN OUR OPINION

Endorsing to inform USC

Every year, The Gamecock endorses the candidates we think are most qualified to lead USC's Student Government. The purpose of staff editorials is to offer informed commentary on what's going on in the news, and SG elections are important enough news that, as the university's student-run newspaper, we have an obligation to offer our opinions. And our responsibility is even greater because we have a level of access to the candidates that most students don't.

The Gamecock has a responsibility to provide students as much information as possible during SG elections.

Of course, The Gamecock's editorial board doesn't just evaluate the candidates' campaign posters and T-shirts — we also research their voting records, SG

activities and other qualifications. We interview each candidate about their plans, backgrounds and stances on USC issues. The editorial board, which represents different areas of The Gamecock's staff, is politically diverse, and every member has an equal vote.

On Wednesday, The Gamecock will present our endorsements for SG president, vice president and treasurer. But students shouldn't vote based on just one opinion. Visit the candidates' Web site at www.sg.sc.edu/candidateview.htm. Go to the debate on Greene Street at 12:30 Tuesday afternoon. And on March 31 and April 1, log onto VIP and vote.

We encourage students to vote for the candidates they think are best. Our endorsements are made to help students be as informed as possible when they choose who will lead the student body.



CARTOON BY HANNAH ANGSTADT, THE GAMECOCK

Reform needed in state's system



BEN EDWARDS
GAMECOCKVIEWPOINTS@HOTMAIL.COM

More power should be given to the governor.

Determining whom to hold accountable for South Carolina's problems is difficult because of the essentially fragmented nature of South Carolina's executive branch.

In American government, three distinct branches serve to check and moderate each other. The executive, legislative and judicial branches of government function with enough interplay to prevent one branch from becoming overly powerful and enough independence to act and resolve concerns.

Sadly, South Carolina's executive branch struggles to function because of pressures from other government branches and a vast power diffusion within the executive branch that relegates the governor, at times, to no more than a figurehead in handling matters that would apparently be under his discretion.

For example, the governor must share power with eight other officials elected in statewide races. The governor cannot remove or replace these officials when they fail to perform adequately.

There is a danger that independent officials within the executive branch might play politics to the detriment of South Carolinians. For example, Inez Tenenbaum, the superintendent of education, is a Democrat, and would likely benefit from mistakes made by Republican Gov. Mark Sanford. Not to argue that Tenenbaum would play politics with education in South Carolina; rather, the importance of having accountability and unity within the executive branch of government must be stressed.

Such situations would never arise if South Carolina's government were fundamentally different. The checks between branches of government are sufficient to prevent the governor's office from having too much power. Further hamstringing the executive branch by splitting it to the point where it cannot act effectively only serves to destroy accountability and hamper the ability of the governor's office to make significant changes for the benefit of the populace.

If that were not enough, the state's chief executive cannot control the other members of the executive branch. South Carolina's Legislature has abrogated some of the executive functions with independent boards and commissions.

As an example of this usurpation of executive authority, the State Budget and Control Board consists of five officials with equal voting power. The governor gets one vote on this board, while the Legislative branch has two votes. Giving the legislature more voting power than the governor in the administration of the budget raises serious questions about the extent of responsibility the governor can bear for administrative problems.

Making the governor more accountable and increasing the efficiency of the executive branch will take two key steps. First, the legislative branch must return the administrative authority that belongs rightfully to the executive branch. Getting rid of the boards and commissions that often muddle the decision-making process will streamline the administration of state government. Secondly, the governor, with the approval of the Senate, should appoint positions so that the executive branch could speak with one voice. Fragmented authority slows administration and needlessly complicates governing the state. Essentially, we have too many cooks in the kitchen.

Edwards is a fourth-year philosophy student.

News can be bad for your health



SHAWN ROURK
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Another new disease has been discovered.

Like many Americans, for the past few days I have been glued to the TV watching brave (stupid) reporters run around the desert with the U.S. military.

In this day of modern journalism, we Americans are exposed to a constant stream of information coming out of the region. It can be a lot for one person to take in.

Thankfully, I, as a good American, have taken the load off the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a new virus that has swept through America. Many people today are suffering from Iraqius Informationus — the overload of war information. This list of symptoms will help you identify whether you suffer from this mind-altering disorder.

You know you suffer from Iraqius Informationus when:

- ♦ Constant night-vision shots on television makes you flash back to old Atari games.
- ♦ You think Gen. Tommy Franks is Ian McKellen from a different angle.
- ♦ You realize the surrender leaflets the U.S. is dropping are actually the first pages of any French war strategy book.
- ♦ You don't have to be drunk for the blur in the middle of the TV to look interesting.
- ♦ You've painted your dorm room desert camouflage.
- ♦ When you've included your suitmates in the "Axis of Evil."
- ♦ When FOX News calls YOU for war analysis.
- ♦ You've actually reached the end of the Internet.
- ♦ You've hacked your mom design pretty little T-shirts for her school, with pretty pink bunnies and Easter eggs for her first-grade class.
- ♦ You've spent \$250 on duct tape and Easy Mac, just in case.
- ♦ You've hacked your way into the Hubble Space Telescope's computer system and are using it to see the exact moment any Iraqi soldier pees himself when he sees coalition forces coming.
- ♦ You start searching for Bahgdad on Mapquest.com and, after two hours of searching, realize that it's spelled wrong.
- ♦ You actually contemplate watching the Oscars, just to get a break from the action.
- ♦ FOX starts airing commercials for its newest reality-TV series, "Joe President," in which Americans phone in each week and pick the new leader of Iraq.
- ♦ You've turned on the TV in the past week.
- ♦ You think it is a good idea to rename Iraq "Freedom Land" and put an amusement park in the desert. You later realize that's not a good idea.
- ♦ You've figured out the official Iraqi speed limit is 45 mph, the speed of the average tank.
- ♦ You've figured out if the new Saddam videos Iraq is releasing are authentic, then Saddam must have hired the same plastic surgeon as Michael Jackson. In response to that comment, Jacko said, "That's just mean."
- ♦ You begin to wonder whether Ari Fleischer owns a bowling-ball cleaner to get his head so shiny and smooth.

Rourk is a first-year print-journalism student.

College Quote Board

DAILY TARGUM
JEN KOSAKOWSKI, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

"It has become increasingly obvious to me in recent weeks that there has been a surge in writings that vilify and invalidate the anti-war activist. There has never been much tolerance for dissent in this nation, but the proliferation and escalation of such rhetoric and its attempts to disengage anti-war activists should be questioned."

DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN
ALBERT SCOVELL, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

"Saddam Hussein failed miserably at diplomacy. We are going without the consent of the Security Council because, as Winston Churchill III put it, the French position is to protect Saddam Hussein from the United States and the United Kingdom because they are more concerned with their "oil for arms" contracts than they are with the moral obligation of those who can defend the defenseless to do so."

GAMECOCK CORRECTIONS

A headline about severe acute respiratory syndrome in Friday's newspaper should have stated that the illness started in Hong Kong, not Japan.

The Gamecock regrets the error. If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know. E-mail us at gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com.

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Cigarette tax could be put to good use

The governor just announced support for raising the tobacco tax to 53 cents to pay our Medicaid bills. Raising the tax to 63 cents and devoting the extra dime to statewide nicotine dependency cessation and prevention is equitable, prudent, neighborly and loving.

Seventy percent of S.C. nicotine smokers want to quit but can't, and each year it costs 6,000 people their lives, each an average of 15.3 years early. We annually spend millions to treat those whose brain reward pathways are chemically married to illegal drugs, but not one dime when the marriage is to nicotine.

An over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapy meta-analysis published in the March edition of "Tobacco Control" found that 93 percent of nicotine-patch and gum-study participants relapsed to smoking within six months. Do we want chemically captive taxpayers, or should we allow them to fund their own escape via effective local nicotine-recovery clinic programs that, at a minimum, increase their odds by 428 percent over OTC NRT? Are they worth saving, or should we simply tax them to death?

JOHN R. POLITO
SUMMERVILLE

New dining options offer great cuisine

College is a time when young people have new experiences to expand their minds and broaden their horizons. This is true

of many aspects of college life and is not limited to academia. That is why I'm so glad that USC is expanding its dining services to offer students a wide variety of eating options.

Gone are the days when USC students were forced to survive on patty melts, tacos and pizza. With all the new eating options on campus, students can expose their palates to a number of different cuisines. The recent additions to the Russell House are obvious examples. Moving the Sub Connection upstairs makes it much more accessible, and with the opening of Cinnabon and Zia Juice, students have easy access to tasty pastries and healthy juices and smoothies. And now that USC has opened Pandini's, students can even get great Italian food; the calzones are excellent. And it's all in the center of campus.

The Grand Marketplace started the trend when it introduced the "Wok Your Way" stir-fry line a few semesters ago, and continued by opening the pasta line as well. The other day, I noticed the GMP offering a delicious chocolate spread called Nutella. I wish they would bring that stuff back.

With the planned opening of new dining facilities on the second floor next fall, the Russell House will become a virtual mecca of eating options. As if the beautiful campus, warm climate, excellent business school and metro location weren't inviting enough, adding these great new dining options is sure to make USC one of the top schools in the nation.

DAN SOPER
FOURTH-YEAR PUBLIC-RELATIONS STUDENT

Festival relocation was unnecessary

This year, Columbia had two St. Patrick's Day festivals. The traditional festival was told it could no longer continue in its old location and still give the profits to charity. So the festival, and everything that made it so popular, relocated to the Capital City Stadium.

There was another festival using the blueprint created by the traditional festival and located in the same old area. But its profits, if there were any after the professional staff took its salaries, will go to planting trees down the middle of Harden Street.

If you chose to pay \$7 to go to the same bar you go to every weekend for free and then see the same homeless guy bumming beers from you, I hope you got a chance to enjoy the Oprah storytelling for kids and the Marine Corps recruiters yelling at you to do more chin-ups.

JOHN CLAYTON
FOURTH-YEAR HISTORY STUDENT

Submission Policy

Letters to the editor should be less than 300 words and include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. E-mail letters to gamecockviewpoints@hotmail.com. Letters will be edited. Anonymous letters will not be published. Submissions are limited to two per person per semester. Call the newsroom at 777-7726 for more information.