

THE GAMECOCK

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IN OUR OPINION

Save soldiers' funerals from nutcase picketers

Funeral protesters deserve to be buried in an unmarked grave. Thankfully, some state officials are finding a way to dig the hole.

A bill passed by a S.C. Senate subcommittee would make it illegal to protest within 1,000 feet of a funeral service, according to The Associated Press. The bill is in response to a Topeka, Kan., church's picketing of U.S. soldiers' funerals around the country. Church members say soldiers are dying because of America's growing acceptance of homosexuality.

The church's Web site is www.godhatesfags.com. We cannot make this up.

These aren't Christians. They aren't even humans. They're lower than dirt.

The bill is a necessary step to prevent all-but-inevitable violence between funeral attendees and those vile enough to picket such a private — and often painful — ceremony. People in the grips of grief have a

short fuse, and we wouldn't blame them for reacting angrily — or with fists.

Keeping funeral protesters at least 1,000 feet away will put the damper on a potential riot. Cries of First Amendment infringement don't apply when such demonstrations will almost surely lead to a brawl among the tombstones, and while bikers in some cities have even used their bodies and bikes to block protesters from the mourners' view, a thick wall of burly sentinels is hard to legislate.

Most disturbing — that such a bill is even necessary. Picketing a funeral is the worst kind of grandstanding, and preying on decent people as they bury their family members shows a callousness bordering on insanity. These aren't Christians. They aren't even human. They're lower than the dirt burying those soldiers.

Peaceful protest is every American's right, but when such a protest eagerly baits people to explode, no protection should be afforded to those sick enough to do it. Let's hope this bill and ones like it find a permanent home in every state's law books.

IT'S YOUR RIGHT

Voice your opinion on message boards at www.dailygamecock.com or send letters to the editor at gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu



CORRECTIONS

If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know about it. E-mail us at gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu

ABOUT THE GAMECOCK

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Office located on the third floor of the Russell House
Editor's office hours are from 2-3 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays
Editor: gamecockeditor@gwm.sc.edu
News: gamecocknews@gwm.sc.edu
Viewpoints: gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu
The Mix: gamecockmix@gwm.sc.edu
Sports: gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu
Public Affairs: gamecockPR@yahoo.com
Online: www.dailygamecock.com
Newsroom: 777-7726 | Sports: 777-7182
Editor's Office: 777-5914
Fax: 777-6482

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Courtesy KRT Campus

Vegetarians make small but sizable difference

Ailing society needs collective effort to aid in protecting planet

One of the funniest things I think I have ever seen was a T-shirt attacking one of the minority groups of America that I do not relate to. It said, "Nobody likes a vegetarian."

As a recovering meataholic, I chuckled before I realized my girlfriend's roommate is vegetarian, and she is now going to kill me.

There is something deeply suspicious about vegetarians.

Take a moment out of your own prejudices and you can see why somebody would be a republican or democrat, gay or straight or even like crap TV such as "The Real World."

But who could realistically turn down the glory of meat?

Look, there is beef. And lamb. This entire column could be about how much I love meat, but it would merely sound like I'm a repressed homosexual.

Regardless of my loves, some people are vegetarian, and here is the catch — most of the reasons seem to make



AARON BRAZIER
Fourth-year philosophy student

sense. Health? Too much meat will kill you, so rejecting it for a less fatty lifestyle certainly makes sense. A n i m a l lover?

Sure, I do not get why dumb creatures need to be saved, but if that is your choice, then the logical conclusion is vegetarianism.

Most importantly, vegetarians are indirectly helping the world a lot more than we meat-eaters are.

Grain takes much less space to grow than a nice big cow.

In a world of rapidly depleting of resources, an easy sacrifice is your daily steak.

Nope, vegetarians are actually doing something right here, despite their creepy rejection of fried chicken. I agree it is hard to get over the fact that fried chicken can represent something bad, but it does.

Moreover, despite their stupidity, animals deserve better treatment than they receive on factory

farms. Come on. We are humans, and we can do a lot better than this.

The collectivization of the farming industry to huge farms and mass produce of chickens is just inhumane.

Small farmers live and die by their coups and their herds more than big factories.

For better or worse, they care about their animals enough to give them space and a better life than they would have in the wild.

So vegetarians are not all crazy after all. There are good reasons for the choice beyond arbitrary hamburger rejection.

However, like so many things that help the world, it is just a small difference. The human race has a lot more problems for the future than where the next T-bone is coming from; fuel, plastic, ozone and global warming will get you even when you are enjoying your tofu.

There needs to be a big change in all our future lifestyles.

Do not settle for just recycling, lowered carbon monoxide emissions and giving up meat. I mean, didn't you watch "Captain Planet" growing up?

IN YOUR OPINION

not curbing patriotism. Perhaps Davis would not oppose a ban of the Mexican flag, and this is why he omitted the fact.

But perhaps the most striking sentence in Davis's article was the following: "The only way you could possibly be offended by the American flag is if you somehow associate it with something negative."

Personally, I am extremely glad to live in America, and I appreciate it as much as anyone. But thinking that your country has never committed an error and can do no wrong isn't patriotism; it's lunacy.

Davis wonders how you can taunt someone with the American flag. I'm sure some Native Americans, Vietnamese and Japanese have very legitimate reasons for

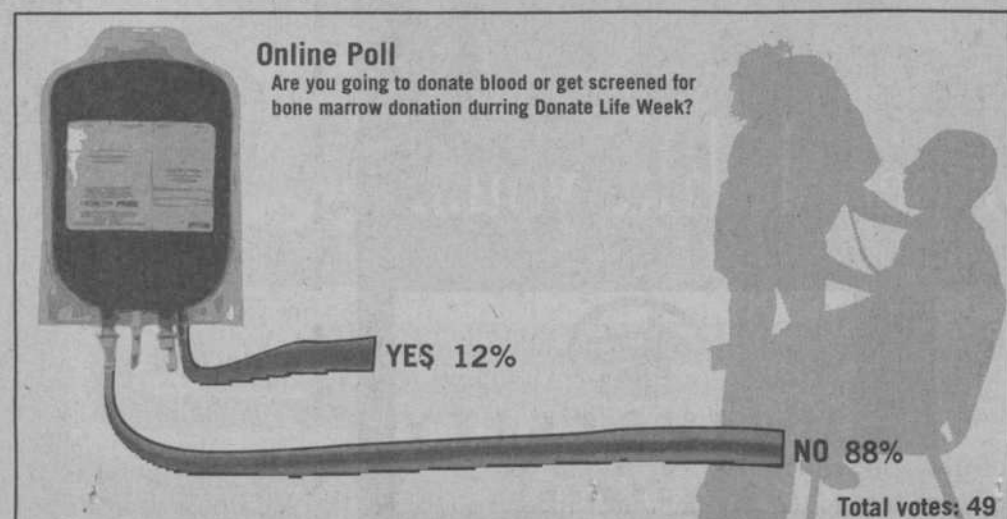
disliking America.

I do think that banning clothing with flags on them is a violation of the First Amendment. The ACLU is correct here. But there are real reasons why these symbols evoke passionate feelings in many people. Even the American flag can remind people of a painful past.

JOHNNY LANHAM
Second-year biology 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 gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu. Letters will be edited. Anonymous letters will not be published. Call the newsroom at 777-7726 for more information.



While partying keep eyes open, for unknown, creepy people

Don't depend on others for safety — you don't know random strangers

You have a breakfast appointment at 7 a.m. You have an exam at 8 a.m. Your apartment building is scheduled for implosion shortly after 9 a.m. These are all very good reasons to wake up and get out of bed.

However, knowing myself, were I in any of those situations, I would probably still be able to convince my groggy self that I should just stay in bed.

I'm pretty hard to wake up. But earlier this week, I unexpectedly discovered a guaranteed sure-fire way to wake my butt up, no matter what the hour. Simply have one of my female friends, whom I know has been drinking in Five Points, send me a text message at 3 a.m. on a Wednesday that says, "I need help."

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a slumbering college student wide awake and freaking out. Sober Stoudenmire reporting for duty.

In most of my columns, I consciously try to not say anything that may be divisive or controversial. But I'm fully aware that what I'm about to say is going to piss some people off. And that's great, because anyone who gets mad at me for saying it is exactly the kind of person I want to hear it.

"I need help." That's the text message equivalent of a runaway freight train or nuclear missile. You can't ignore it, and you have to act fast. Otherwise, something really bad could happen.

Let's go ahead and set something straight right now. I know it's true. All of my friends know it's true. The restaurateurs know it's true. The Columbia police know it's true. You probably know it's true as well.

If you're a pretty young lady in Columbia, you can get into almost any bar in Five Points underage with little trouble and drink until your feet are flying and your liver is crying.

But they're not alone. Plenty of older guys hang around to buy them drinks, take them back to their house and try to do things that prompt these girls to send me text messages saying they need help.

I'm not saying every guy down there is a jerk. Not every girl is irresponsible. But you better believe you can get into real trouble — really fast.

I believe the type of person you'll meet in a bar is the type of person you'll lose in a bar. Very few romance stories begin with "Well, it all began when we started doing body shots."

Know what you're getting yourself into. Know who you're with. Just because someone is willing to buy you \$10 drinks doesn't mean they're nice.

Please be responsible. Make sure you have at least one sober friend to watch out for you. Do it for your sake. Do it for your friends' sake. Do it for my sake — I like to sleep.



CHASE STOUDENMIRE
Second-year history student