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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Intervention needed

Law would combat domestic assaults

Sorry isn't enough for acts of violence in domestic relationships among girlfriends and boyfriends, husbands and wives and other family members.

And "sorry" doesn't comfort victims of domestic abuse when police officers arrive at the scene, only to quiet the screams and shouts heard behind closed doors. Many officers are not allowed to interfere with domestic affairs, but are instructed only "to keep the peace."

But it's possible that Nebraska state senators have made the task of protecting innocent folks from domestic violence a little easier.

Under LB330, advanced 29-0 Monday following two hours of debate, law enforcement officials now have the right to arrest a person -- without warrant -- if the officer has reasonable cause to believe the person has committed a felony or misdemeanor, or has reason to believe such a person will not be apprehended unless immediately arrested.

But what makes the bill so effective in domestic abuse cases is the clarification of the bill's language brought about by its author, Sen. Carol Pirsch of Omaha at the urging of Sen. Ernie Chambers, also of Omaha.

The bill gives officers those rights if a person is "threatening another in fear of imminent bodily injury."

Although it is the responsibility of officers to refuse to abuse certain rights granted in the bill, a policeman's badge can also be a welcome sight when a family quarrel has become a domestic disturbance threatening the livelihoods of both children and adults.

Officers, even those with good intentions, have previously lacked authority and have been left somewhat helpless in curtailing domestic abuse. LB330, with its sidekick LB218, can help to create a more confident atmosphere when law enforcement officials are called to address these cases. And it may even encourage victims to have some trust in law enforcement.

-- Diana Johnson
for the Daily Nebraskan

Reader contests gun opinions

Robert Gale and NRA member Brian Allen (DN, April 13) apparently need reading glasses.

They and the rest of the pro-gun lobby need to realize that in its entirety, the Second Amendment states: "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

Opponents of gun control seem to conveniently never notice the first half of the amendment. Perhaps this is due to the serious doubt it casts upon the NRA's never-ending cries defending the "constitutionally guaranteed" right to keep and bear arms.

The founders of our Constitution accepted the Second Amendment because of their hatred toward standing armies (such as the one we have today, as opposed to a militia, or an army of the citizens). They reasoned that an army of citizens would be less likely to oppress the people than would be an army of professional soldiers. And of course it would be ridiculous to place gun control laws upon a militia.

Lo and behold, the founder had imperfect foresight, and today's free society finds itself without a militia. In the absence of a militia (mentioned in the ignored half of the Second Amendment), it would seem that the Second Amendment simply no longer applies. Claims of the "constitutionally protected" right to keep and bear arms are then doubtful at best.

What a shame it is that so many thousands of Americans have died due in part to our country's foolish trepidations toward gun control laws. Other countries without such attitudes have spared themselves this

problem. Let's look at some numbers:

In 1983, 35 people were murdered by handguns in Japan. In the same year, there were eight handgun killings in Great Britain, six in Canada, seven in Sweden, 10 in Australia and a mere 9,014 in the United States.

And that's just handguns. I'm not even counting the people killed by the semiautomatic assault rifles, which our citizens so direly need to fend off any (gasp) communist invasions.

Gale and Allen go so far as to assert that removal of this Second Amendment "constitutional protection" would lead to a neglect of other protections such as free speech, a free press, freedom of religion and so forth.

I don't know how they reached this conclusion. The last time I checked, such tyranny wasn't particularly prevalent in Japan, Great Britain, Canada or Australia. And the unarmed citizens of Sweden are more free than even ourselves when it comes to freedom of expression.

Hunters should be able to own their shot guns and hunting weapons. I simply have trouble with such weapons as concealable handguns and semiautomatic assault rifles. They have one purpose -- to kill people.

The pro-gun lobby would be eager to point out that most owners of non-hunting guns are responsible. They are, but there will always be those who are not. In any case it seems ludicrous to claim that the rights of such owners are more precious than the thousands of lives that those rights cost us every year.

Joe Luby
freshman
general studies



Party affiliation is meaningless

Chambers calls himself a Republican and no one bats an eye

So, now Ernie Chambers is a Republican. Several weeks ago the controversial state senator from Omaha announced his switch of party allegiance to the GOP. The shift means little in terms of state politics, since the Nebraska Legislature is, by stipulation, non-partisan. It does say a lot, however, about the state of bipartisan politics in the United States.

My initial response to the Chambers transfer news was a slight chuckle and an under-the-breath, "Oh, come on."

That Chambers should decide to check the column marked "R" beside his voter registration signature means virtually nothing. In my six-year sojourn in the state of Nebraska, Chambers has variously claimed to be a Democrat, an independent and a standard bearer for the upstart New Alliance Party. So why not go for the grand slam?

In all of this state capital soft shoe, Chambers' views have changed very little. And for all his political partner-changing he is no closer to being a Republican than Phyllis Schlafly is to being a feminist.

I paused in mid-smirk. I have for years claimed to be a Democrat, and it is there that my voter registration loyalties still lie. But as time goes by I find it more and more difficult to affiliate myself with outdated and often falsified New Deal rhetoric. Yet when I consider the messages to be sent in a change of registration, I balk, and consider my present affiliations the lesser of two evils.

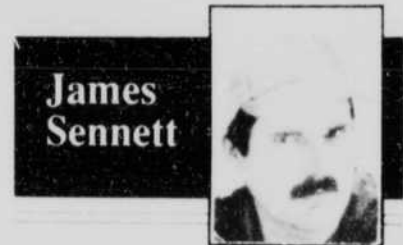
Chambers has switched, I have not. Herein is exemplified the paradox of contemporary American politics.

Chambers exhibits the first of two seemingly contradictory effects of the current mess we call the two party system. Party affiliation says much too little about the one claiming it. All that is required legitimately to claim one party or another as one's

home base is just that -- claiming to belong.

Chambers can call himself a Republican and no one bats an eye.

In recent elections, followers of political outlaw Lyndon LaRouche have won significant victories under both party banners, and no one even hints at inconsistency. LaRouche himself started out a Democrat and now calls himself a Republican, all the while spouting the same fiscal poison. Southern Democrats and New England Republicans have long felt much more comfortable on the opposite side of the hall.



James Sennett

So what is the price of party association? And what is the message sent? Erosion of strong party commitments in favor of winning the vote at any cost (even deception?) has led in recent years to a blurring of party lines and an easy defection from one side to another. It is a defection that costs nothing -- not even a change in view.

Some laud this change as "bipartisanship." The sticky sweet air of cooperation surrounding President Bush's inauguration was enough to make one toss one's lunch. But the genius of the two-party system is choice.

When borders disappear, so does choice. And when voters hear, as they did in our recent presidential election, Republicans touting environmental and educational issues and Democrats calling for law and order and reduced spending, they just aren't sure what the choices are any more.

So party affiliation is utterly meaningless and Chambers is ex-

cused for what (most likely) amounts to a mindless publicity gesture. Why, then, my hesitancy concerning my own political fence-jump?

When I consider a switch of my own, I am taken aback by the flipside of the paradox. Not only does party affiliation say too little -- it also says too much.

This is why I am uncomfortable with my Democratic loyalties. The staunch refusal of my party to wake up and smell the proverbial coffee has left me cold.

The nominations of Ted Kennedy clone Walter Mondale and old line Massachusetts liberal Michael Dukakis in the last two elections were signs that the success of Republican foreign and domestic policies from Nixon to Reagan had said nothing to the party still basking in its post-depression success. This is not to mention my age-old parting with the party on such issues as abortion on demand. The times, they are a-changing; the Democratic party, it is a-not.

But, to quote Teyva from "Fiddler on the Roof," "on the other hand..." When I consider a change of political venue, I come face to face with the possibility of being numbered with those who continually oppose gun control in any significant form, any kind of national health insurance or assistance, and a strong-armed approach to the problem of human rights violations worldwide.

My choice seems to be that between backing Marxist rebels or Fascist rebels; refusing unborn babies the right to live or suffering seniors the right to die; opposing economic recovery or government-sponsored poverty relief.

I don't like it where I am, but the grass on the other side has yet to look greener. I am seriously considering a move to "Independent," as soon as I can convince myself that that is not the wimp's way out.

Sennett is a graduate student in philosophy and a Daily Nebraskan editorial columnist.

letter

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editorial

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