

Biting back

Term limits for officeholders good option

Nebraska's constituent advocate has come up with a new plan. Omaha's Ed Jaksha, made famous by an unsuccessful drive last year to place a 2 percent limit on state spending, now heads a committee that is seeking to limit the terms of Nebraska officeholders.

The group may propose a Nebraska constitutional amendment that would limit Nebraska's U.S. senators to two six-year terms and U.S. representatives to four two-year terms. It also would limit state senators and the Nebraska attorney general, state auditor and secretary of state to two four-year terms.

The goal of enforcing limits on terms is to prevent incumbent officeholders from using their positions to retain power.

In a perfect democracy, term limits would be unnecessary. Voters would use their own power to get rid of power-abusive incumbents.

But democracy in the United States is far from perfect. In this world of political action committees and mudslinging campaigns, the stereotypical politician who dupes the constituency with promises, promises, promises and flashy advertising is too often a real-life character.

Too often, politicians lose touch with the voters who elected them.

Proposals better than term limits have been advanced to aid the dismissal of such politicians. Some have suggested limits on campaign spending. Others want to place political action committees under some form of federal control.

But no other option has drawn as much grass-roots support as term limitation has.

Three other states — Colorado, California and Oklahoma — already have term limits similar to the constitutional amendment possible for Nebraska. At least a dozen other states are considering such a plan.

At a time when skepticism of politics is high, term limits are a popular way constituents can bite back.

Limits would not only force corrupt officials out of office, they also would encourage successful incumbents to strive for positions higher up on the political ladder.

That's not to say that such plans don't have drawbacks.

Many good officeholders would be forced out early by term limits. Constant turnover of officeholders would necessitate more frequent retraining and cause government to run less efficiently. Freshman members of Congress may be more likely to be influenced by special interests. Term limits also remain questionable for legal reasons.

Despite the drawbacks, term limits are preferable to allowing the present state to continue. Until better options develop more support, term limitation would serve as an imperfect solution for an imperfect system.

Until a better plan gains support, Jaksha's constitutional amendment deserves serious consideration.

—J.P.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Football not to blame for UNL's budget woes

Let's stop using football as a scapegoat for all of the academic and financial woes at this university.

Reaction to the proposed budget cuts, especially the elimination of the speech and classics departments, has run the gamut from insipid to eloquent. Yet, regardless of the general merit of each letter and regardless of the stature of each author, it seems that the general conclusion takes the form of a self-righteous diatribe against the athletic department in general and the football program in particular.

We can hardly envision, as Prof. R.D. Stock (DN, Sept. 19) indicates, that cutting the speech and classics departments will make the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's primary role and mission "football management." If, however, this does become UNL's primary focus, the fault certainly will not lie with the athletic

department. The academic quality of any university depends first and foremost on the quality of its faculty, second on the skills and vision of its administrators and finally, on the enthusiasm of its students.

The Nebraska football program, indeed, the athletic program as a whole, has been a source of collective pride for the people of the state. A successful football program, volleyball program or any other athletic program is not antithetical to successful academia. Nor can academics be enhanced by the dismantling of the athletic department.

Lisa Valladao
graduate student
undeclared

Julia Darlington
senior
history

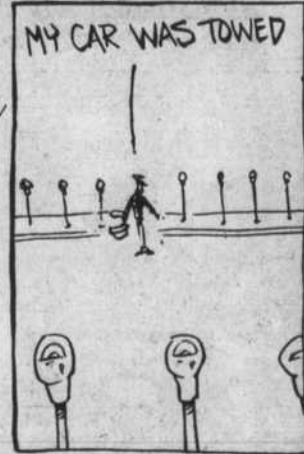
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Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R



WALTER GHOLSON

Rap industry promotes violence

There's a war going on and a lot of people are dancing around it because they don't want to admit they're being hurt.

What I'm talking about is the musical battle between the gangster rappers and the positive tip rappers.

A few weeks ago I watched in disbelief as L.L. Cool J beat Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince and Heavy D & The Boyz for MTV's rap video of the year award.

Maybe it's because I'm thirtysomething, but that just didn't click. I have nothing against L.L. But I just don't understand how his "Mama Said Knock You Out" qualified as a major accomplishment in rap.

I thought Fresh Prince and Jazzy were going to win. Their video had all the elements: kids, family, friends and good, clean fun.

Instead, the wise MTV types picked a prancing, tough-talking mack daddy, rapping as though he was a heavy-weight contender for a hip-hop boxing title.

Ice Cube, Chuck D, KRS-One, Harmony and Queen Latifah didn't even get a nomination. Why? There's a conspiracy going on in the business, and if you don't own a radio or TV station or a record company, there ain't a damn thing you can do about it.

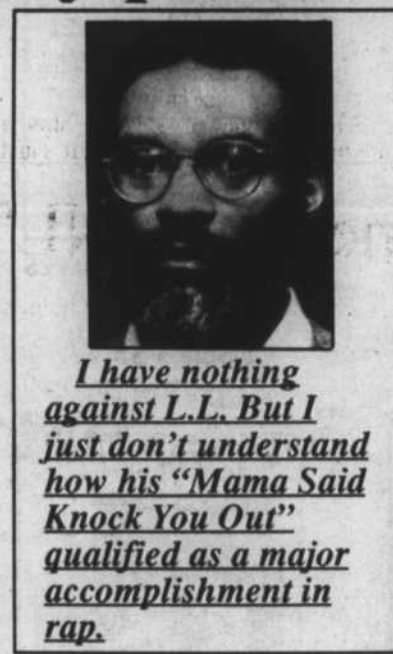
It wasn't always like this. Back in the early days, old-school rappers weren't concerned about air play and MTV awards. Back then, there were no big-time recording contracts because outside of New York City, very few people had heard of hip-hop.

During those days, you had to go to an inner-city club, house party or street dance to hear disc jockeys such as Afrika Bambaataa, Jazzy Jay, Kool Herc, The Cold Crush Brothers or Grand Master Flash, and if you wanted to take the music home, you had to buy the cassettes from the DJs.

Then, the recording industry began to realize that disco music record sales were slumping. It sent out spies to find out what was happening. Lo and behold, they "discovered" a new sound that they couldn't duplicate.

That was the beginning of an exploitation that continues today. The record companies started spreading their money around the South Bronx and Harlem, looking for something to package.

Probably the first such package was The Sugar Hill Gang's "Rapper's Delight," with lyrics such as "hotel-motel, Holiday Inn, if your girl starts acting up, then you take her friend."



I have nothing against L.L. But I just don't understand how his "Mama Said Knock You Out" qualified as a major accomplishment in rap.

Recently, Heavy D compared the behavior of the artist representatives, commonly called A&R people, to pimps looking to break in a new prostitute. He said A&R types constantly sneak around inner-city neighborhoods looking for any rap artist they can exploit for a few dollars.

The problem, Heavy said, is that many of these rappers don't have the business sense to negotiate long-term contracts. Often, he said, the artists have a limited repertoire and if their first release doesn't hit gold, they are out of the business as fast as they got in.

Now the major soldiers in the rap war are crews with hard-core videos that idolize street-gang fashions and show gangsters in expensive cars with big bankrolls, gangsters who seem to live large in a city full of poor people.

And, of course, videos flash an image of young minority men who swagger down city streets wearing sunglasses with Oakland Raiders caps on backward.

Or, they're rapping about pulling a 9-millimeter on somebody, while well-developed females in various states of undress undulate in the background. Don't forget the recent proliferation of groups who label themselves "Niggaz," "Bytches," "Hoes" and "Dogs."

This doesn't apply to all rappers, and even though I'm thirtysomething, I enjoy rap music and find it one of the most creative forms of entertainment to come onto the music scene in decades.

But I cannot ignore that the rap warring seems to spill over into the

streets, where "dissin'" turns into drive-by shootings and physical assaults on women.

In the September issue of The Source, the magazine of hip-hop music, politics and culture, Tom Dog, a New York rapper, explains his new release, "Fuck Compton."

Dog says he chose the title because "the stupid A&R people think Compton, Calif., is the hardest neighborhood, so they're always looking to sign any group saying they're from Compton."

The article was full of profanities criticizing Compton groups such as N.W.A., Most Wanted, DJ Quik and Dr. Dre, whom Dog described as "not a real man" because of his alleged assault of Dee Barnes, host of the rap video show "Pump It Up."

While such incidents seem to be isolated, these tough rappers represent the image record companies seek when they're looking for "new talent": the hard-core gang banger with a rap group.

I wonder why the industry wants to present this image for consumption by a mostly minority public, and why they refuse to look for performers such as Latifah, Harmony, Moe Dec, KRS, Yo-Yo, MC Lyte, Brand Nubian or Blackwatch, which project positive messages.

But why ask why when we already know the answer. It's just another indication of a conspiracy to deliver negative messages and visual images to American minorities and those non-minorities who watch and listen.

All you have to do is count the number of Top 10 videos featuring gangsters, automatic weapons, women as sex objects, black people in jail or rappers saying "F this" and "F that."

At the same time, the "Stop The Violence" and "We're All in the Same Gang" projects and the recent "Human Education Against Lies" video and similar videos get less and less air time.

We should ask why these record companies don't sign rappers to make products showing the realities of drug and alcohol addiction. We should demand rap videos about the importance of getting a good education and taking care of family.

The violence in the streets is directed at us and it seems to increase along with the video war for control of our thought.

As Harmony says, "We've got to heal ourselves."

Gholson is a senior news-editorial journalism major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.