

Priming the pump

Bush's actions timed to win voter favor

Some states have been getting big breaks from the Bush administration lately. And, by a strange coincidence, these states will have their presidential primaries soon. Since 1977, the automobile industry has been responsible for installing devices in automobiles to reduce the amount of gas fumes released into the atmosphere during car refueling. But the Environmental Protection Agency is expected soon to switch the responsibility to gas station owners, requiring them to install gas pump nozzles that do the same thing.



It just so happens that Michigan's primary is next Tuesday.

To help out the struggling natural gas industry in the Southwest, Bush has announced regulatory changes encouraging the use of natural gas in cars and electric utilities. Texas has its primary today.

To prepare for California's June primary, Bush had the Interior Department reverse policy and release billions of gallons of federally controlled water for farming in the drought-stricken state.

In an election year, voters' cars are filled with

promise after promise by candidates with presidential aspirations. But Bush has the advantage of authority to give the public what it wants. That becomes a useful tool to gain support and halt the decline of Bush's popularity in recent presidential approval polls.

This ability to give voters what they desire is a distinct advantage for incumbents.

Whereas challengers only can promise results, incumbents like Bush can accomplish them with just a signature — and it usually turns out that the signatures appear on legislation that will satisfy a large number of voters in politically influential states.

This raises the question: Is Bush the president of the United States as a whole, or just the states with a large number of delegates up for grabs?

Can voters in Nebraska, Alaska and other states with a significantly smaller number of delegates count on special help from the government?

Nothing is wrong with Bush using his power to help out troubled industries. But when he waits for an election year to finally act, one must wonder if he is motivated by a concern for the general well-being of the voters, or by a concern that he may be looking for a new line of work next year.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Baldwin shouldn't get fees paid

I would like to know why the athletic department wants to pay for Baldwin's medical and legal costs? Do they believe he set a fine example that athletes all over should try to emulate? Or do they just feel sorry for him as the "victim" of all of this.

Sure. Call him the victim. While you're at it, call Mother Theresa a Mafia boss and George Bush an underprivileged welfare recipient. I just don't understand why everyone forgets that he was the attacker. He was feeling a little nutso, so he grabbed the nearest human being and tried to squish his pain out of her head. He almost killed her.

Almost killed a human being. Oh, in that case, let's let him out of jail,

but not here because people would get too upset. Let's put him in Omaha. Let's just hope that no dogs there need to be walked. Oh, and let's pay for all of his expenses, since poor Scotty doesn't have the money to pay for his little tirade. Her rehabilitation was expensive? Who cares! That's her responsibility — she was the one who was walking her dog! She was at fault.

We need to take care of our poor little Scotty, victim of the hard, cruel world.

What a crock.

Yvonne A. Sabatka
freshman
news-editorial

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

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

Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. Whether material should run as a letter or guest opinion is left to the editor's discretion.

Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

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 St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



BRIAN ALLEN

'Offensensivity' bars freedom

Screw You! Not a very friendly little phrase, but apparently innocuous. I often don't find it forceful or biting enough to convey my thoughts, so I usually go with a related phrase starting with that evil "f-word."

Despite my low estimation of the vileness of this phrase, it, along with some other choice phrases on a novelty key chain, were enough to get a University of Nebraska-Lincoln custodian fired for "interfering with the job performance of others" and "bringing sexually oriented items to the work site."

The fired custodian, Douglas W. Geiger, has filed a lawsuit for reinstatement, back pay and lost pension benefits after being fired last July for bringing to work an electronic key chain. At the push of a button, the key chain displayed several phrases or words, including "screw you."

Two supervisors found the key chain offensive and told Geiger not to bring it back to work. Geiger was placed on administrative leave the next day when he told a supervisor he had placed the key chain in his locker before work.

Come on. Let's be reasonable here — he was told not to bring the key chain to work again and, in my view, he didn't.

Sure, he brought it to campus again, but he put it in his locker before work, before he clocked in. He couldn't possibly have been interfering with anyone's job performance on the second day, when he didn't bring the key chain "to work." He only brought it to his locker before work.

And as for "sexually oriented items," that's kind of a judgment call. While I don't know what the other phrases on the key chain were, if "screw you" is any indication, it sounds to me as though the key chain was more insulting than "sexually oriented."

If this precedent of dismissal for sexually oriented materials holds, I suppose any UNL employee could be fired for having condoms in his or her wallet or purse, or birth control pills, or a lingerie catalog, or any of about a million other items that could be in any way construed as having some relation with sexuality.

"Work site" is another judgment call. Evidently, an employee's per-



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sonal locker is considered part of the work site.

I wonder how far this "site" extends. Are the grounds and parking lots included? If so, I suppose if I were a university employee, I could be fired for having the "Girls of the Big Eight" issue of Playboy magazine under the seat of my truck.

It sounds as though we have a few supervisors, administrators and, indeed, a large portion of the campus suffering from what Opus, in Berkeley's cartoon strip "Bloom County," termed as "Offensensivity."

I'm sorry, but it is not possible to protect everyone from being offended at all times. I'm sure someone probably was offended by Geiger's key chain. So what.

As I am writing this, someone is walking near me with what I would consider a "sexually oriented" phrase on a T-shirt. If I had the same hypersensitive and easily offended attitude that is being displayed by some university officials, I would jump up and demand she be fired instantly on the same grounds as Geiger.

The sexually oriented phrase I'm

referring to happens to be a man-bashing type of phrase that I find somewhat offensive. But I'm sure not everyone does, and to expect to be protected from everything I find offensive would not only be a ridiculous expectation but would severely limit my awareness, not to mention the rights of others.

Are we going to ban everything anyone finds offensive? I'm often much more offended by vocal liberals, radical feminists and professors who assign too much homework than I ever have been by any key chain. But to ban them all from campus, while resulting in a much better environment for me personally, would not benefit the campus as a whole.

Offensiveness, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. What I find offensive is not what many other students find offensive. Everyone sees things a little differently.

That's the diversity UNL officials are continuously trying to obtain. No matter what the subject, someone will find it offensive, but as long as it doesn't encroach on the rights of others, we just have to live with it.

It does people good to be offended once in a while. It gets them thinking and often presents to them new ideas and thoughts.

If we try to get rid of everything that anyone finds offensive, we will be left with a very bland, drab and unstimulating campus, not to mention one totally devoid of any type of freedom of speech or expression.

While I have no doubt that the custodial supervisors had the best of intentions in the firing of Geiger, they would do well to remember the words of Court Justice Louis Brandeis:

"The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding."

University officials, in their zeal to get rid of Geiger and his offensive key chain, may well have created a better working environment for a few employees. But by setting a precedent against anything offensive, they have shown their lack of understanding by undermining their own goals of diversity and toleration.

Allen is a senior mechanical engineering major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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