

Daily
Nebraskan
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EDITORIAL

Time to grow up

LB100 serves students, educates society

The reasons for Nebraska to continue allowing students to drop out of school at 16 are as outdated as the law itself. Since 1949, students in Nebraska have been required to go to school until they were 16. The age was set, largely, to allow rural students to leave school to work on the farm. But in 1993, that justification cannot hold. To survive in today's increasingly complex and scientific society, a person almost has to have an education. That means a minimum of a high-school degree. And that is why Nebraskans should support Legislative Bill 100.

LB100, sponsored by state Sen. Dennis Byars of Beatrice, would require students to stay in school until they were 18. It would require students to put in an ample amount of time to earn their degrees. More importantly, it will provide them more time to mature. The bill will prevent students from dropping out of school as soon as they are old enough to drive and hold down a minimum-wage job.

The bill, which was given first-round approval Friday, also allows for students to leave school before they are 18 if they graduate, earn an equivalency degree or join a separate education program.

It would not, as some critics argue, turn schools into some sort of jail for those students who don't want to be there. Instead, it would offer students two more years to consider their future. The maturity that may come between ages 16 and 18 may help a student see how important a high-school degree is in today's society.

Education sacrificed

Funding would present long-term benefits

Traditionally, when money gets tight, education gets squeezed. This year, apparently, will be no different.

Sen. Scott Moore of Seward said in the Omaha World-Herald on Saturday that his answer to classes becoming increasingly full at UNL was for the university to cut its spending in other areas.

"Even a starving man can afford to lose his appendix or gall bladder," Moore said.

Sacrificing the quality of Nebraska's education for short-term financial gain would be equally as foolish as giving up one's organs if it could be avoided. Moore's lack of insight is disturbing.

A Census Bureau study released last Wednesday showed that, on the average, college graduates earn \$1,039 more a month than high school graduates.

Simply put, college pays. Increasing the number of college graduates would increase the standard of living for Nebraska residents.

Education is an easy target for legislators who must cut a shrinking budget. But it would be a mistake for the Legislature to cut the university's budget in this financially strapped time.

Sen. Moore should be pushing for more, not less, money for the University of Nebraska. Wasting money is not the answer, but providing adequate funds for an institution that provides great benefits to the state only makes sense.

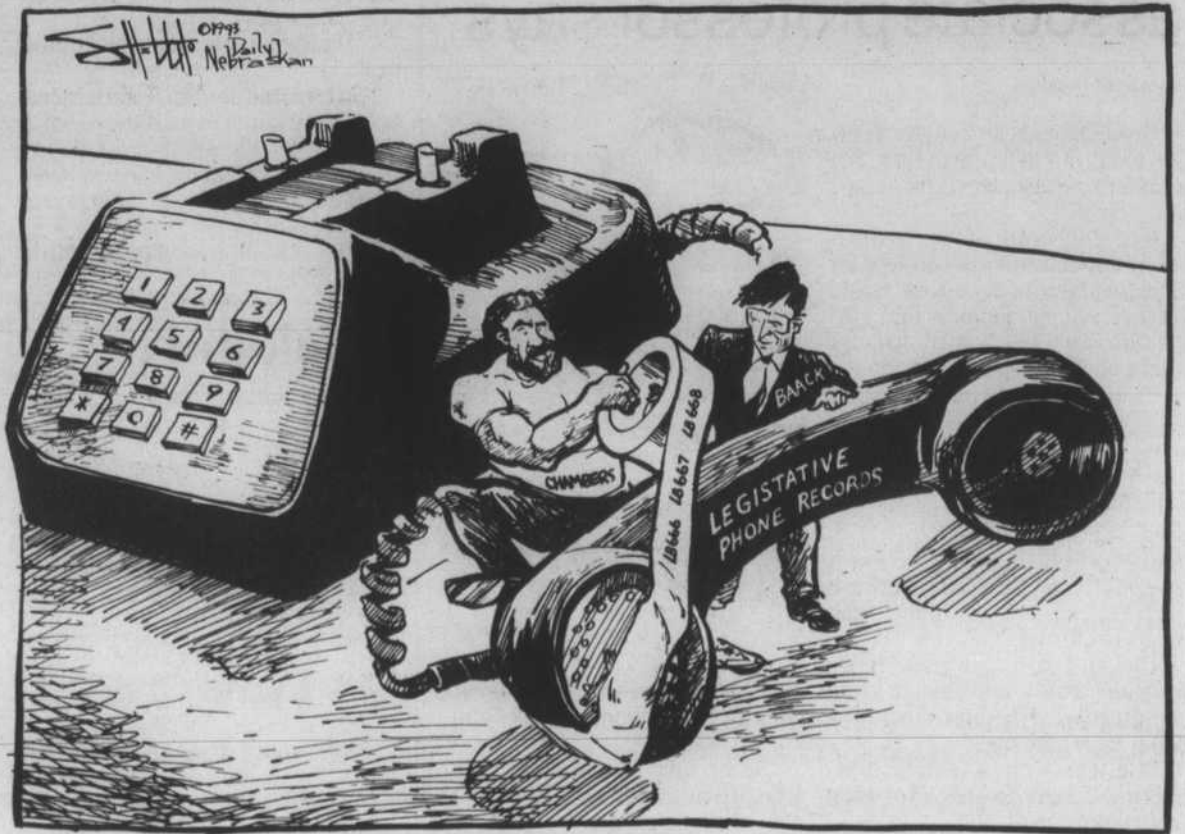
Education is an investment, and every dollar cut from education is a part of the future sacrificed.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Staff editorials represent the official policy of the Fall 1992 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents. Editorial columns represent the opinion of the author. The regents publish the Daily Nebraskan. They establish the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its students.

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. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. 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.



JEREMY FITZPATRICK

Petitioners should check Bible

I am opposed to public prayer at graduation ceremonies. It's against my religion.

That's a poor joke on my part, actually, because I am a Christian, and it is Christians who are pushing so hard for prayer at graduation and Christians who generally support it.

It's not that they are more prayerful than anyone else. It's just that the particular Christians who are arguing for graduation prayer know that it will be their God who will be thanked.

But I think that they are a little misguided. Some reading up on their own religion might help them out.

I quote from Matthew: "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward."

Christ said that, and the last time I checked, being a Christian meant believing in Christ and trying to model your life after his teachings. I'm not sure some of the "Christians" that are running around demanding prayer at graduation meet that definition.

They seem more motivated by the belief of ASUN senator Ron Schmidt, who said "no Constitutional right against not being offended" exists, than by Christ's teachings about tolerance and helping your fellow human beings.

If I read them right, our petition crusaders are saying that it is important to make a very pious, self-righteous display of their religion at graduation.

Christ never did that. He even said we shouldn't.

I quote from Matthew again: "And in praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their



If I read them right, our petition crusaders are saying that it is important to make a very pious and self-righteous display of their religion at graduation.

many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

Apparently, Christ wasn't too thrilled with people who were convinced of how holy they were and made a point of saying so publicly.

What could our petition crusaders do instead of pray? They could do the things Christ really valued that transcend all religions: feed the hungry, take in strangers, help the oppressed.

Christ says in Matthew, "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

Quite a philosophy, isn't it? In helping people in need, we can actually help God.

Instead of public prayer at graduation, then, let's all go out after the ceremony and spend the day helping people. We'd be doing something real to finish our education.

Ah, but that idea is not likely to be so popular with our petition crusaders. They might actually have to work to thank God. And we wouldn't want that, now would we?

It's much more fun to say a prayer for a minute and be able to forget it.

If you want to pray at graduation, pray to yourself.

But if you are really concerned about being religious, go out and do something real afterward. Help people in need, do something to promote equality or sacrifice something you value.

There is nothing worse than a hypocrite. And there is nothing more hypocritical than standing on a soapbox and shouting for prayer at graduation while ignoring the meaning of the teachings for which you are arguing so loudly.

I have absolutely no idea, but I would imagine that the God I believe in would be disappointed to see these ASUN senators running around getting signatures for their prayer petition.

All the time they are wasting could be spent doing something that really matters.

Prayer is important to the extent that it represents a true commitment in your heart to the God you believe in and to your fellow human beings. If you have that commitment, it will be obvious without you participating in a public prayer.

If you lack that commitment, praying in public for 10 hours or gathering petition signatures for 10 years can't provide it.

Amen.

Fitzpatrick is a junior political science major and the Daily Nebraskan opinion page editor.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Prayer

Sam Kepfield's column on the subject of prayer at UNL's commencement ceremonies struck me as little more than an advertisement endorsing ASUN's recent asinine crusade for retention of graduation prayer, as well as an effort to spit a little venom at UNL Chancellor Graham Spanier.

ASUN's resolution and petition drive supposes that putting the choice in the hands of students makes prayer at graduation OK. It doesn't.

ASUN Senator Ron Schmidt said of the resolution, "It's a helluva lot better than state-sponsored atheism." It is typical, right-wing paranoia that omission of religion automatically means atheism. It doesn't.

Graduation should be a memorable event for all graduating, not

some, not the majority, but all. Anyone who believes their God can't abide by a silent prayer on an event shared by many others besides themselves should re-evaluate the true meaning of their faith.

James Zank
senior
art and English

If one looks at that seldom-read document, the Constitution, the First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The lack of prayer at graduation comes much closer to violating the Constitution than having a prayer does.

Prayer at a state university can be considered an "establishment of reli-

gion" only if just one religion is represented. Those who favor prayer at graduation have never suggested that Christianity or other particular religion be represented; rather that the benediction be performed by religious leaders from varying beliefs.

By telling the majority that they cannot pray publicly, one has to question whether the university is "prohibiting the free exercise" of religion.

Regardless of whether prayer is allowed at graduation, those with religious beliefs will find a time and a place to pray. It's too bad that they are not allowed to do it during one of the most important milestones in their life.

Jeff Krohn
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