

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

Hillary should reduce her role

I like Hillary Clinton. I admire the policies she fights for. Her work for the rights of children and for providing health care to all Americans is both intelligent and compassionate.

She strikes me as someone who cares what happens to Americans and who wants this country to do well.

But I think it is time for the first lady to step away from the official policy-making role she has played in the Clinton White House.

Unlike any presidential spouse in history, Hillary Clinton has helped make decisions in the White House. In a very real sense, it is hard to determine where Hillary ends and Bill begins.

Up until the recent Whitewater scandal, I thought there was nothing wrong with that. Why shouldn't the spouse of the president — the person closest to her or him — play a major role in the White House?

But Whitewater has changed my thinking.

Hillary Clinton's name continually comes up in the theories that are circulating about the Clintons' Whitewater land investment in Arkansas. According to this week's issue of Time magazine, Hillary handled the failed investment, represented clients in front a regulator her husband appointed, had White House counsels Vincent Foster and then Bernard Nussbaum as personal lawyers, and fought the appointment of a special prosecutor.

quick to rush to judgment and place Hillary Clinton as a major figure in this scandal. At this point it is not clear if either of the Clintons did anything wrong. And if there was any wrongdoing, it is not clear who is responsible for it.

But the fact remains that a cloud hangs over the White House, and Hillary Clinton is part of that cloud. All legislative action by the administration has slowly ground to a halt.



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and it will not resume until Whitewater is resolved.

The fact that Hillary Clinton is not an elected official further complicates matters.

For example, Bernard Nussbaum is another figure that has been involved in the controversy over Whitewater. Nussbaum, the White House counsel, was involved in briefings from Treasury Department officials who were investigating a savings and loan involved in Whitewater. After heavy criticism of the briefings, Nussbaum resigned.

Although he is probably guilty only of exercising bad judgment, Nussbaum quit because he was becoming a center of controversy in the Clinton White House. The government and the needs of the United States are bigger than Nussbaum, so he stepped out of the way so the country could move forward.

What would happen if Hillary Clinton became a roadblock to all of Clinton's legislative programs? I don't think that will happen, but it could. On Whitewater or any issue.

President Clinton has all but tied the central element of his presidency — health care — to his wife. She is the administration's central spokeswoman for the plan. She has traveled around the country campaigning for reform.

If anyone else was in charge of health-care reform and that person became the center of controversy, she or he could be removed, and health

care would survive. One person's place in the White House would be sacrificed for the well-being of the country.

But Hillary Clinton cannot be removed from her position. She is the president's wife. She cannot be forced out or asked to leave.

If any kind of controversy did center on her, then the president's chance of pushing his version of health-care reform through Congress would be greatly reduced. The country would suffer the consequences.

No one has proven that Bill or Hillary Clinton have done anything wrong. Despite the media attention to the scandal in recent weeks, no evidence has surfaced connecting them to illegal activities.

But Hillary Clinton's role in this scandal has made clear the problems of having the president's spouse involved in a major policy-making role.

Hillary Clinton is not an elected official. She is not accountable to the voters.

She is also not really an appointed official. She is the president's wife, and she cannot simply be removed from her position.

Hillary Clinton is a talented person who cares about the United States. But for the sake of the accountability of government and the well-being of the country, her policy-making role in the White House should be reduced.

Fitzpatrick is a senior political science major and the editor of the Daily Nebraskan.

E. HUGHES SHANKS

Restroom is homophobia home

One morning last week as I passed through the Nebraska Union, I stopped to use the men's room. I had just heard that AIDS can have an 11-year incubation period, and I was somewhat troubled.

As I noticed the usual piles of fresh, crisp USA TODAYs on the floor beneath the toilet stools, I thought, 11 years? Geez... what happened to seven years?

I started counting back to 1983. That year, there were only seven or eight confirmed cases of the human immunodeficiency virus and, if my memory serves me well, one death from AIDS in the entire state.

I figured I was in the clear. Then I thought, wait a minute, what if they change the incubation period again? I started counting back again... As I zipped up, I noticed a stranger two urinals down was standing about two feet back from his stall. I considered this to be a gross violation of men's room etiquette.

I mean, hey, I ain't no homophobe, but that's an open invitation.

You may wonder what HIV, AIDS and homophobia have to do with my experience in the men's room. It simply reminded me that homophobia isn't just gay-bashing or calling people derogatory names. There are more subtle kinds of homophobia that we practice without even realizing it.

There are four main rules for the men's room: Don't talk to anyone you don't know. Don't look at anyone. Don't touch anyone. And above all, don't let anyone see anything of yours.

I was still counting back past the 11-year incubation period. I thought, I'll never again pick up a USA TODAY from the men's room floor. But I ain't no homophobe. I just want to be more careful.

I'm not stupid enough to think reading a newspaper from the bathroom floor would infect me with HIV. And I thank the generous persons who over the years left me their USA TODAYs. However, the thought of yet another extension of the incubation period of AIDS should make us



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all be more careful.

I was raised by two feminists, my mother and my father. Luckily, I didn't grow up with the message that homosexuality was wrong. My father never spoke ill of anyone. I think he thought homosexuality was strange, but he never put anyone down. I didn't learn to be homophobic at home.

While stationed in Norfolk, Va., in 1977, I frequented several bars. I never scored. I didn't realize then what a blessing that would be. I came close to scoring once while at the Jolly Roger Bar. But my new friend turned out to be a man.

We had left the bar and were cruising the coast. In a flash of an instant I noticed a five o'clock shadow on my companion. I thought, "Good Lord, I gotta get out of here."

I didn't want to embarrass my new friend. I actually thought that "he" may have thought I thought he was a man all along. It at no point occurred to me to say, "Er, excuse me, why, I thought you were a woman. Since you're not, please take me back to my barracks." I just couldn't talk about it. Part of me believed he had misled me and had somehow wronged me. Now, I see how silly that was.

Was this homophobia? Then, no. In retrospect, it was.

Unfortunately, the story doesn't end here. I was still faced with solving the problem of how to get away without dealing with the issue. Without any embarrassing confrontations.

My solution was to return to the base under the guise of needing to get some money. After that, I went to a

phone, telephoned the base police and explained to them that I had been picked up by a man posing as a woman and asked them to escort him off the base.

The police were understanding. I fully expected them to sympathize with me. At the time it seemed reasonable that they too would feel he was in the wrong.

I wasn't a homophobe without a conscience. I called back and asked what happened. The police assured me they had politely escorted him off the base.

Five years later I moved to Houston. I worked with several gay men. Determined not to succumb to homophobic tendencies, I accepted their invitations to go out after work. I was proud to have been accepted. We developed genuine long-lasting friendships.

We frequented the Montrose section of town, a widely known hub of the gay community. One evening we were at Mary's, probably the single most notorious gay bar in the country. As we watched the evening network news, the Nebraska Legislature, which had just voted down some gay rights legislation, was on the screen. As fate have it, I was wearing a red Nebraska sweatshirt.

Suddenly, all eyes were on me. I rose up from my bar stool and proclaimed, "I may be from there, but I ain't no homophobe."

Shanks is a graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



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The Daily Nebraskan is now accepting applications for senior staff positions for the fall semester.

Senior staff positions include:

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- Copy Desk Chief
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Summer Sessions Bulletins are available at the Service Counter 107C, Admin. Bldg.

