

Daily Nebraskan

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Abuse of power

Stenberg uses office to condemn policy

Office-holders get all the breaks when election time rolls around. A public office comes with a boatload of perks.

But forget the franking privilege and all that other irrelevant stuff normally associated with incumbents and elections — Attorney General Don Stenberg knows the real bonus of holding an office during election season:

A lofty perch from which to sling mud and distort issues.

The most recent example of this was Stenberg's audacious segue last Wednesday from law enforcement to morality.

The attorney general saw fit to use his position to criticize the policy of allowing parolees to live with girlfriends. That move is 100 percent within Stenberg's authority as attorney general of this state — if there is a logical reason for the criticism.

Stenberg, however, cited only one incident when a paroled prisoner living with a girlfriend ran afoul of the law. Does the fact he was living with his girlfriend really have anything to do with it, though?

Probably not — which is why Stenberg didn't dwell on the case. Instead, he chose to don his preaching frock and deliver his latest sermon.

"The State of Nebraska ought not authorize and approve cohabitation of unmarried men and women in this manner," Stenberg said.

"What kind of example does this set for our young people," he continued, "when the State of Nebraska gives its official approval to the cohabitation of unmarried men and women?"

When we last checked, the approval of the state government was not a consideration when choosing roommates. It shouldn't be, either — even for those on parole.

So why did Stenberg choose to bring this issue up loudly enough to get it on the front page of Midlands News section in last Thursday's Omaha World-Herald?

Easy. Don Stenberg is running for the U.S. Senate — probably against Gov. Ben Nelson. The opportunity to try and fool voters into blaming Nelson for every parole board policy was just too tempting.

So Stenberg labeled the parole board policy a "Nelson administration policy"; he abused his position as attorney general in order to muddle the issues and sling some mud Nelson's way.

And at the same time, he got to force his code of morals down voters' throats, giving us a taste of things to come.

And remember: it's only March.

Bon Appetit.

Editorial policy

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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: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



Logo mania

Advertisers blast public from every angle

WASHINGTON — Five months after my son's birth, it was time for some outside entertainment. First stop was a local movie theater.

Settling in, I watched the screen fill with a single word, "love." No movement, no scenes from a new film — just "love." After an eternity, I learned what I was watching: an ad for the new Beatles anthology.

Then came commercials for Plymouth automobiles and Coca-Cola. I noticed that the popcorn that was once sold in a tacky red bag now came in an artsy black and white sack — complete with a designer jeans ad.

The next week, we attended a Washington Bullets basketball game. While cheering the home team on to yet another loss, I noticed that scores of steps at USAir Arena had been stenciled with the words "Office Depot." I saw entrance portals pushing Safeway, CVS and GEICO; scoreboards hawking Marlboro and Amtrak; "TOYOTA"-printed pads wrapping the backboard supports. Two miniature dirigibles, with "Domino's Pizza" and "Lays" (potato chips) printed on them, spouted coupons onto our heads. Even my employer, the Washington Post, had a blurb on the giant screen.

All told, I counted 336 surfaces — including the uniforms of the "Reebok Bullettes" cheerleaders — plastered with logos in the arena.

It didn't bother me so much that my husband and I paid good money to see a mediocre movie and a losing game. What was irksome was that we spent a combined \$88 — \$14 for the film and \$74 for two game tickets — to have several hundred companies hawk their wares at us.

What was bothersome was that it took being out of the loop for several months to notice the inescapability of advertising, and how accustomed we've become to it.

Like other baby boomers, I grew up with television, the medium that years ago permanently implanted "Does she or doesn't she?" and "I can't believe I ate the whole thing"



Donna Britt

"Don't other folks wonder why there's a parade of men, women and kids acting as unpaid human billboards for Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, Nautica, DKNY and Fila?"

into my brain. But in those pre-cable days, television was always free. Now we pay for the privilege of being sold to.

Am I the only one who thinks merchandising has gotten out of hand? Don't other folks wonder why there's a parade of men, women and kids acting as unpaid human billboards for Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, Nautica, DKNY and Fila?

Receipt tapes at the grocery store now advertise the local cleaners and oil-change establishments. Half-hour infomercials sell "essential" hair straighteners and vitamins. The Eddie Bauer model of the Ford Explorer sports-utility vehicle offers a few additional features for an additional two grand.

Sporting events may be the worst. Every phase of the proceedings is sponsored: the building (Phoenix's America West Arena, Washington's

coming MCI Center); the halftime show (the "Prudential Halftime Report"); the states ("Dutch Boy In The Paint"); Nike "jewelry" pinned to the lapels of college coaches; and messages embedded in the ice on which hockey players skate (Bud Ice beer). Recently, my 10-year-old noticed that towels used by players during an NBA game featured three Perry Ellis insignias.

And don't even think about ads on the Internet.

Is this stuff merely irritating, or has it turned us into a nation of spending drones? Paul Farhi, a business reporter for The Post, says he, too, was floored by the amount of advertising at a recent basketball game. Farhi has written about what he calls "over-commercialization," but says, "I don't think anybody cares. ... There's so much of it, people fail to notice it anymore."

Silver Spring, Md., graduate student Kathy Rushing dismisses the ads we find in our mail, grocery carts, even in school materials, as "background noise" — except when

it comes to her three children.

"It's become an important part of parenting to make kids aware that advertising wants to manipulate them," says Rushing, who recently found herself discussing a perfume TV commercial with her daughter, 17. "It was supposed to be sexy, but sort of glamorized someone who was almost like a stalker. It really bothered Jessica at this stage of her life."

No wonder I became hypersensitive about ads after having a baby. Merchandising, says Rushing, has become "another piece of society (parents) have to fight against."

We'll never win. Recently, my husband bought the cutest infant-size denim jacket. I loved it — except for the "Gap Classic" logo on back. When I suggested to Kevin that I would have problems with letting our baby shill for the Gap, he fixed me with an unmistakable look. Just Do It.

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P.S. write back

Send your brief letters to:
Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588, or Fax to (402) 472-1761, or email <letters@unlinfo.unl.edu> Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.