

OPINION/PAGES

GUEST VIEW

Drug testing

Concerned parents need approved option

From The Minneapolis Star Tribune.

As one clear measure of separation that drug abuse has brought to American households, consider that half a dozen companies are now selling home drug-testing kits.

As an equally plain gauge of the silliness of this political season, consider that one outlaw manufacturer is being paraded as a crusader against a government alleged to be soft on dope and too tough on entrepreneurs.

It is sad reality for many parents that despite deep concern and firm guidance, their children will use drugs. Understandably, these parents reach for a chemical test as another tool for protecting or restoring the health of their kids. Unsurprisingly, such testing is now widely available through physicians, clinics and counseling services.

But as testing tools go, the do-it-yourself type can be a very blunt instrument. It transforms the parent from counselor and confidant into cop and, possibly, spy. Even when the testing occurs in the open, with children providing samples of urine or hair, it is likely to introduce a coercive dimension to an already strained parent-child relationship.

Some companies offer a more devious, less-reliable alternative: a treated pad with which parents can wipe schoolbooks or stereos, purportedly capturing traces of drugs deposited by their kids — or anybody else who happened to touch the tested objects. Imagine the heart-to-heart after those results come back.

Sunny Cloud, the former Georgia school-teacher whose home urine-test kit made headlines, says she got the idea for her business after taking her own son for a drug test, and finding the experience expensive and disagreeable. She assembled a specimen cup, instruction booklet and prepaid laboratory mailer into a kit she priced at \$40 — and had sold about 1,000 of them when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration pointed out that federal law bars selling such an item until it's proved safe and effective.

Cloud and supporters call this a ludicrous interference in a family decision-making, and argue that parents have a right to do home testing. On the latter point, not even the FDA would disagree. It has already approved a highly similar kit, as a prescription product.

But because Cloud has refused to submit her product for FDA review, there's no way for the agency to make sure that a specimen will reach the testing lab without contamination.

Or that the lab has adequate safeguards against mixing up samples, which for confidentiality reasons are labeled with numbers, not names. Or that the lab results are reliable. If the FDA can't know these things, neither can consumers.

Despite its significant problems, a reliable home drug test should be available to parents. But the key word is reliable. In telling the FDA to take a hike, Cloud wasn't defending parents' rights. She was simply making a business decision, gambling that political pressure — and parental desperation — will help her triumph over a sensible regulation.

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MEHSLING'S VIEW



LETTERS

DISGRUNTLED FAN

I used to have the utmost respect for Husker Coach Tom Osborne.

In fact, I previously viewed him as one of the most professional coaches in NCAA college football. I was very proud for him and his team when they achieved the title of national champion.

Now I am ashamed of the way he chose to run up the score this weekend against the University of Oklahoma.

John Blake knew it would be a tough game against the Huskers. Little did he know that Osborne would choose to use his superior arsenal to totally humiliate Blake's inexperienced Sooner squad.

Shame on Tom Osborne. I hope he remembers this when OU matures to their potential and whips the pants off the Huskers in the very near future.

Doug Harris
former Husker fan

DISGUSTED CATHOLIC

Steve Willey's column on "Cafeteria Catholicism" was downright disgusting.

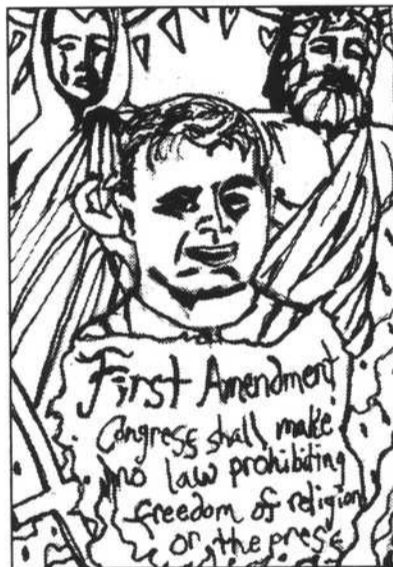
It is people like him who bring out misinformation and cause all of the divisions among Christians that there are today.

His ability to create a new version of reality is very outstanding. His quips, although somewhat humorous, are totally inappropriate for all people.

I am glad that Mr. Willey is no longer a Catholic — the Church does not need people like him in it.

I hope that he realizes that most are not fooled by his deception of his childhood stories and in fact are appalled by the whole thing. The entire column including the editor's note (written by Willey) was repulsive, and I hope that the DN would respect my freedom of religion by not running these ridiculous columns about it and by limiting the use of lies in a column.

John P. Hogg
senior
political science



JASON GILDOW/DN

INFORMED VOTER

In responding to Andy Bosselman's letter in Thursday's Daily Nebraskan, I would ask him to take his own advice and choose his candidates carefully.

If Mr. Bosselman does so, he will learn that the candidates endorsed by College Republicans are the candidates who truly support education. The facts are very clear on this issue.

The 1995 Republican budget increased student loans over seven years from \$24 billion to \$36 billion. The maximum level for a Pell grant was increased from \$2470 to \$2700. Funding for work-study programs increased from \$616.6 million to \$830 million. In total, student-aid funding increased from \$38.3 billion to \$41.6 billion from fiscal year 1996 to fiscal year 1997. How can a \$3.3 billion increase be considered a cut?

The candidates endorsed by College Republicans do seek to eliminate the Department of Education, in order to return control of our schools to the states and communities instead of the federal bureaucracy. Our candidates also endorse school-choice programs which give poor children the same opportunity to a quality education as rich children have. These facts indicate that the Republicans are truly the party that is

pro-education.

Mr. Bosselman's allegations are typical of the scare tactics used by Democrats to cover the fact that they have no plans of their own. These scare tactics are not backed up by the facts, and the students of this university are intelligent enough to realize that.

Chad W. Pekron
senior
political science and economics

DISPLACED PARKER

I have a HUGE problem with the UNL parking services.

First, at the beginning of the year I was told that I could park anywhere after 4:30 p.m. by someone at information. I parked at Bancroft Hall on Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m. for two months before receiving my first ticket. This is ridiculous!

I have a remote pass and there are no buses at 9:30 at night. I do not feel I should have to pay for the mistakes of the people at information.

Second, last Wednesday night there was a volleyball game at the coliseum. I had a class. Parking Services shut off all of the main parking lots so no one could park there. I was told to find some other place.

Of course, on a volleyball night, there are NO parking places anywhere. Where was I supposed to park so I could get to my required class?!!!

I have a friend who told me she had to park at Harper-Schramm-Smith. We should not have to walk in the dark that long of a distance at 9:30 p.m.!!

Something must be done soon. I pay for parking, and when I have a night class, I should be able to park wherever for my own safety. The parking services must make a change. I know I am not the only one who thinks this way.

Kara Widhalm
junior
communication studies

P.S. Write Back

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