

Cliff
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Strike one

Supreme Court decision just first battle in war over Internet

Our frontier is still free. Yee-ha!

On June 26, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Reno vs. ACLU* in favor of the American Civil Liberties Union that the Communications Decency Act is indeed unconstitutional, thus relieving every person who has ever done anything at all questionable on the Internet.

The CDA, for those of you who are unfamiliar with it, stated that anyone who was responsible for making anything "indecent" or "obscene" available to minors on the Internet was in violation of the law. According to those responsible for its creation, the goal of the CDA was to prevent child pornography and the "continuing widespread of smut before our children's very eyes."

What is was, in effect, was a gag order for the whole Internet. Saying that anyone who puts up something indecent on the Internet where a child can read it is kind of like saying if you say anything indecent in public, you are in violation of the law.

The Internet is something larger than most people understand. Oh, sure, sure, people think that the Internet runs across the world. But in its own way, the Internet is a world unto itself. There is no race in the Internet, or not one that can be seen anyway. People aren't judged by anything more than their words, grammar and ideas. A utopia in some ways.

But, like all good things, the Internet has a dark side. There are those who linger around with pictures of children doing despicable things, mutilated carcasses and more. Imagine it as the most dangerous part of New York you can find.

Still, 95 percent of the people who use the Internet never enter that world. It's not something that interests them nor will they stumble upon it by accident.

What the people up on the Hill don't seem to understand is that you can't find these kind of things without substantial work. It's not like when a child turns on a computer, immediately the most vile and lewd thing feasible pops up before them. There are kids who search for them; but that's the children, not the Internet.

Many ways to censor the Internet exist: CyberSitter, Net Nanny, Parent Watch and dozens more. Some screen for images, most block out anything controversial. But in the end, this is a parent's decision — they put it on their computer and it affects their household, no more.

What the government was attempting to do would have been infinitely worse. Conversations about the use of sex in George Orwell's "1984" would have been banned. Information regarding AIDS would have been banned. People's stories of wars, if they were too graphic, would have been banned.

Luckily, the Supreme Court looked at the CDA and said that it will not do. Sometimes the system does come through. In the end, though, this is only the first step in a long battle. Congress already has several "Son of CDA" laws planned and hopefully each and every one of them will be struck down.

The First Amendment guarantees me my freedom of speech. Each of you is guaranteed the same. But if something even remotely like the CDA passes, even this column itself might be considered "indecent" by someone somewhere and I could be arrested for it.

Let me ask you this — how much is your freedom worth to you? Is it worth being a little uncomfortable? Is it worth having to watch over your kids a little more each day? Or would you rather have the government tell you what's acceptable and what isn't?

Me, I say the government.... Well, let's just say that they can leave my freedom alone. How about you?

Do you want to be free?

The Internet is still free and I hope it stays that way. There will be other frontiers and other exploration. There will be other forums and other places to talk. But how many of them will be safe? My life, my business. Isn't that the way it should be?

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Haney's
View



MATT HANEY/DN

Jessica
Kennedy

Through the roof

For many, rising tuition rates could put college out of reach

Cheers.

It's another payday for the university and another beer for students to cry in.

In case you missed it, the regents raised tuition 4.5 percent. That's about three dollars more per credit hour. That's on top of a 1.5 percent increase in fees for technology services.

That 4.5 percent increase is more than inflation is rising, more than the three percent pay increase university staff got this year and a hell of a lot more than any increase most students will see in their paychecks in the next 12 months. I know that I probably won't see a three percent pay increase. Heck, I've made the same at the DN for three years running.

Let's face it: The regents, with good intentions, have once again taken a mighty step on the road to making higher education an elitist opportunity.

I'm glad I'm graduating in December. I honestly don't think my educational funding source could handle another of semester of high costs. And I'm lucky — mom and dad have been bankrolling my tuition and fee costs for the last four years. I don't know how people work full-time and full-time school, along with paying for tuition, books, rent and living costs.

There is an indirect correlation; as the costs rise, the enrollment at our "flagship" campus will lower. Students

will face the tough dilemma involved in choosing between a program of choice and a school of reasonable costs.

I am fully aware that the increase is to finance building repairs.

But they are the repairs of years of neglect. Years of administrations with agendas more "noble" than the physical maintenance of the university. And our generation has to pay for it; paying for buildings we'll never use in their renewed splendor.

But there is a bigger problem involved in this tuition increase.

When the regents met to decide the fate of thousands of student budgets, there was one very bright ray of light. Student body president, Curt Ruwe, voted against the tuition increase. He is the first ASUN president in modern memory that voted against a unanimous regent board.

Our president actually voted in-line with student opinion. What a wonderfully novel idea.

Here's the kicker: people were still upset with Ruwe's vote. Not the students — I'm sure most weren't even aware of the nay vote. Administrators and fellow regents were actually upset with Ruwe's. It would appear they were unprepared to deal with dissension.

So much for democracy in the university's administration.

I applaud Ruwe's stand and find it

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unfortunate that he received any flack for his truthful and admirable stand.

Though the regents are noble in their reasoning, the increase hits student unfairly, with little regard for the realities in which students live.

As much as I appreciate many of the amenities of the university, I urge the regents to find the waste and repetition in the system and eliminate it.

Those savings should save students — and their education dreams — for classes to come.

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