

# OPINION PACES

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## Our VIEW

### The costs of crime

*More jail cells won't solve problem*

Crime definitely does not pay. Just ask the residents of Saunders County.

Last week, the Saunders County Board voted to join other counties in the 5th Judicial District that are considering building a regional jail. It seems Saunders County – and many of the counties in the 11-member district – can no longer keep its prisoners under control, simply because the county has too many inmates for its county jail to contain.

“The popular viewpoint seems to be that more cells equals a good solution for rising crime rates.”

The result is that many of these counties “farm” out their inmates to other local jails, if for no other reason than to make room for more prisoners in their own jails. The process costs Saunders County about \$60 per day per inmate.

And the trend shows no sign of slowing.

Built in 1929, the Saunders County Jail has just 20 beds, and no way of segregating female inmates. Those inmates are often the ones farmed out to other jails, costing the county a total of about \$40,000 per inmate each year, up \$7,000 from three years ago.

In Platte County, the Columbus jail was built with a capacity of 27, but now averages 120 inmates per month. The county spends \$154,000 more on inmates now than it did three years ago.

These counties believe the building of a regional jail – paid for and operated by the counties in the district – would alleviate the pressures of modern correctional problems. The popular viewpoint seems to be that more cells equals a good solution for rising crime rates.

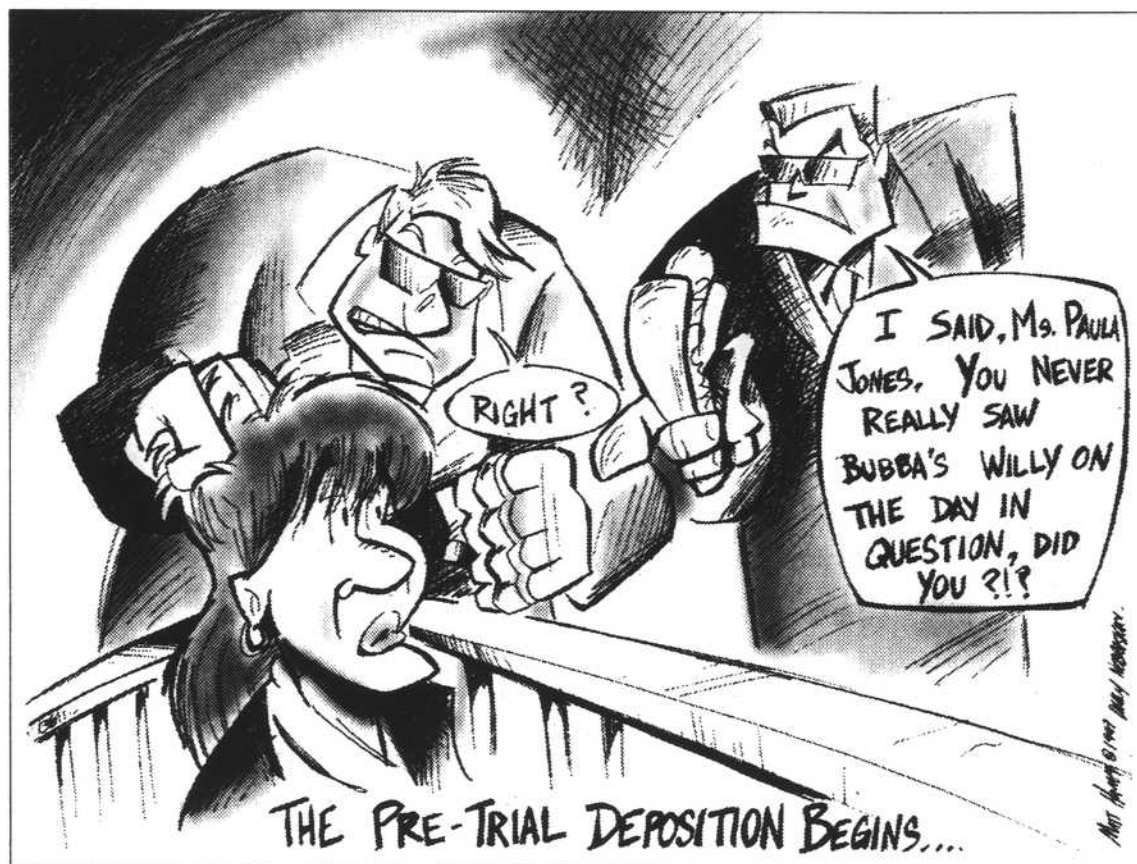
Such a mind-set begs the question, should county tax dollars be spent on a new jail, or on a new way to look at handling Nebraska's rising crime rates?

Obviously the more the state grows, more crime will exist. But is the solution to lock away criminals after the fact? That's like trying to heat the house by using the doors and window sills for firewood.

These counties do need a jail similar to the proposed facility, but after it is built, maybe some attention should be given to prevention and rehabilitation programs, both in the jails and the community.

That would perhaps show the most growth of all.

## Haney's VIEW



### Powerless

*Treatment of sorority members during outage unfair*



**JIM VANCE is a senior physical and health education major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.**

It was a dark and stormy night.

Not an appliance was on, not even a light. Sorority girls nestled frigid in bed, with hopes the cold weather would not leave them dead.

The sisters waited at 16th and R, with hopes LES would not be far.

But it seemed they never showed. OK, so maybe it wasn't quite a fairy tale; but it wasn't fun, and now there are a lot of mad women.

When I first heard what happened to the sorority houses without power during the blizzard, I was sympathetic. I thought they were getting a raw deal, much like they felt.

Heck, they aren't even getting a refund, since natural disasters aren't covered in their contracts.

“They just threw us out into the cold, literally,” said Jessica Ferguson, a sophomore who was one of about 250 members of the four houses which went without power from the evening of the snowstorm on the Oct. 25 until Halloween.

So it was off to find a home or seek shelter at a friend's place. Some were gathered as large as 15 in one house. One family I talked to told me the five girls who stayed at its house probably cost it around \$100 to \$150. So, of course, people got mad.

They got mad at Lincoln Electric

System for not turning the power back on quickly enough. They got mad at Chancellor Moeser for having school in session, since it was very tough for them to get to class, given the circumstances. Lastly, they were mad at University Housing for not coming to their aid, since they are students of the university and live on campus.

Being mad at LES is pointless. They worked hard to help rejuvenate the city, and everyone knows this. Getting mad at Moeser is understandable, since coming to class after sleeping in strange locations is never fun.

Being mad at University Housing is also understandable, if you are not fully aware of their situation and position. I would even go so far as to ask if it was ethical for this university to not do everything possible to help its students.

There is one problem – this is not about ethics, it's about money and the law.

Doug Zatechka, who is an alumnus of Phi Sigma Epsilon and is in charge of housing, enlightened me on a few unarguable points.

First: Only four houses, located near Harper, Schramm and Smith residence halls, are funded by revenue bonds. This means people buy bonds to help pay for the facilities which are built, then make money off the business which is produced from the facilities. The business in this case is the private corporations – the chapters of these fraternities and sororities – which rent out the facilities and pay University Housing for its services.

Second: The four houses which lost power do not have a contract of business with University Housing. Therefore any money which would go toward helping the four houses

would be a misappropriation of funds and could subject Mr. Zatechka to a lawsuit.

“These are individual, private corporations with no business arrangement with the university, on private property,” stated Mr. Zatechka.

He was unable to even send workers to help these houses because he could not cover the liability for the workers or the work they would do, since these workers were hired to take care of dorms and university housing, not private corporations.

By Oct. 29, Mr. Zatechka attempted to do what he could legally, which was open the doors of the dorms and its cafeterias. And he will bill the private corporations for the services legally provided.

Another argument is that if houses are not taken care of by University Housing, they shouldn't have to follow University Housing rules. There is a slight misconception here, because these houses follow recognized housing rules, not University Housing rules. University Housing and housing are two separate entities. Students have a choice of where to live when they attend school here: the dorms (which are University Housing), fraternity or sorority houses (only some of which are University Housing), at home, or off campus.

Even in a place where Mother Nature's wrath is nothing new, this university was totally unprepared to aid its students immediately.

It's sad there were no pre-arranged emergency plans provided by the private sorority chapters for not only its kids, but for its patrons.

I am most disappointed though, that money and the law can actually prevail over our conscience to do what is right.

God bless America.

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