

# The carrot and the stick

*Alcohol bills should carry equal weight for government incentives*



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Have you been in the Nebraska Union this week?

If you have, then perhaps you walked by the booth in the new north entrance sponsored by students from UNL's Project Care. Project Care is a student organization dedicated to "creating an alcohol-responsible environment," according to the literature they distributed at its booth.

The great thing about its booth was that the group was letting students try on goggles that simulate the effect of having a blood-alcohol concentration of .08. Students had the opportunity to try on the goggles and try to do simple things like catch a red rubber ball, larger than a softball. You guessed it. The vast majority couldn't do it.

As many of you know, the Nebraska Legislature is considering lowering the blood alcohol concentration from .10 to .08 for the charge of driving under the influence.

LB235, sponsored by Sen. LaVon Crosby, is currently stalled in committee. It's controversial, because

there are a lot of fools out there who think that .08 is too low.

Bob Corner, of the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety, can point you to numerous tests and studies that prove that when people get to .08, they don't think they can drive. He also points to the .08 simulation goggles, which seem to cause people to be unable to perform even simple tasks.

As Corner correctly observes, if people are unable to do even simple tasks like catching a ball, they're certainly in no condition to be driving.

C. K. Durea, Sen. Crosby's Legal Aide, told me that Sen. Crosby has supported legislation to lower the blood alcohol concentration to .08 for at least ten years. Durea also said that Sen. Crosby does not support lowering the BAC to .08 because of incentive money, though.

President Clinton is using the "carrot" approach to get the states to pass the .08 legislation. If Nebraska doesn't pass LB235, then the Office of Highway Safety will not receive between a half of a million and \$800,000 in federal incentive money, according to Bob Corner. And Durea also told me that had Nebraska got in at the beginning of the push for the states to lower their blood-alcohol content to .08, the state would have received more money, and every year we delay, the amount of the incentive shrinks.

I'm worried that the carrot approach may not be good enough to get Nebraska to lower its legal limit to .08.

Durea told me that three of the seven members of the Transportation Committee are currently opposed to lowering the legal limit and that one is wavering — Sen. Chris Peterson.

Durea also told me that the members of the transportation committee have been extended an offer to try the .08 goggles, and so far, none of them have.

Two other bills related to highway safety — LB585 and LB586 — provide for the impoundment of all vehicles owned by repeat DUI offenders and making open containers in vehicles unlawful, with certain exceptions.

LB585, sponsored by Sen. Curt Bromm, was designated by him as his priority bill on Wednesday of this week. I support this legislation wholeheartedly, although I think I would have impounded the cars of first-time offenders as well.

LB586, another of Sen. Bromm's bills, puts a little more teeth into the existing open container law. Under the existing statute, a law-enforcement officer has to see someone consuming alcohol from an open container for there to be a law violation.

Under the proposed legislation, however, open containers of any kind, open or with a broken seal, the contents of which are alcoholic and have been partially consumed, constitutes a violation of the open container law. People in the back of a motor home can drink from open containers, but no open containers can be within the reach of the driver (that takes care of football Saturdays,

huh?).

The federal government has taken the "stick" approach with respect to LB585 and LB586.

If the Legislature doesn't pass LB585 to change its open-container law, it will lose about \$2.3 million for federal road construction, according to Shawn Nowlan, Sen. Bromm's legal aide.

And if the Legislature doesn't pass LB586, providing for the impoundment of the vehicles of repeat DUI offenders, the state will lose another \$2.3 million for road construction, according to Nowlan.

I wish the federal government had used the stick approach with respect to the .08 legislation.

Perhaps some of you recall from reading one of my earlier columns that I work as a law clerk for the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles. I process the appeals from administrative license revocations for DUI.

One of the things our office does is provide training to law enforcement agencies on the administration of preliminary breath tests and intoxilyzer tests.

One weekend, I borrowed an Alco-sensor and conducted my own experimentation. I consumed two beers an hour over a four-hour period, and the highest reading from me was about .086. I felt *really* drunk.

A friend of mine consumed about twice that much — two beers and two shots per hour over a four-hour period. His highest reading was about a .18. He was falling-down drunk.

I worked in the prison system for a long time. I had a lot of experiences testing inmates for alcohol. The limit for inmates is .02.

You would be very surprised how obviously intoxicated people are at .04 or .05 — easily detectable by correctional staff like myself — and people like you, too.

I'm worried that the Legislature is going to adjourn this year without having passed the .08 bill, LB235.

As such, I'm asking for your help.

Call your state senator's office and tell them you want them to vote for LB235. If you don't know who your state senator is, call the clerk's office at 471-2271. Tell them where you live and they can tell you who your senator is.

Call Sen. Chris Peterson at (402) 471-2617 and tell her to get LB235 out of committee and onto the floor.

Don't let the Legislature be more interested in keeping precious road-construction dollars coming in while ignoring legislation like reducing the BAC to .08, legislation that will save lives.

I'm not saying that the impoundment and open container legislation isn't important; what I am saying is that .08 legislation should be of equal or greater importance — and should carry a bigger "stick."

Write or call today, before you leave for spring break.

And for God's sake, please have a safe break. *Don't drink and drive.*

The life you save may be your own.

## Gimme a break

*Collegiate holiday springs confidence, opportunity for co-ed adventure*



**JAY GISH** is a senior broadcasting major and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Ahhh ... you can almost smell the Kahlua in the air, can't you? By the end of today, the school bells will have rung, and the holiest of holy college weeks will have begun.

The Meccas of spring break (also known as south-of-the-border tourist traps) will fill up with rampaging collegiates, high on the winds of total freedom (among other things).

I can hear herds of college boys running around in tight circles saying, "Man, this is gonna be my first/last/best spring break ever! I have GOT to get some chicks this time!"

Of course, there are some losers who somehow finagled themselves out of classes early. They have a substantial jump on those still here reading this (and we all hate them, right?).

So, because I side with the underdog, I thought I'd use this Friday to offer a short catalog of hot spring break advice, condensed from my own personal experience.

(*Surgeon General's Warning:* The author has no experience. Consumption of this column may contribute to poor health conditions, including but not limited to severe impotence.)

Don't faint when you read this, but try not using any alcohol for once. (Okay, breathe ... breathe.) Think about it. The primary reason for drinking on spring break is to rid you of inhibitions, to make it easier to hit on more people, right?

How much more confidence do

you need, when you know that everyone within 200 yards of you is lit up?

Women on spring break are noted for a marked decrease in judgment. If there's ever a time where confidence should come easy, it's among the spring break crowd.

Also, have you ever tried being the only totally sober one at a gathering? (I know, I know ... probably not.)

Every other guy is stumbling around, slurring beyond recognition whatever idiotic line he was going to use.

Meanwhile, you come off like Superman and Gary Cooper rolled into one.

Even if some drunkard tries to step in between you and your lady, you can likely push him over.

Here's a fun and smart idea. Do you have any baby siblings or relatives?

Volunteer to take care of them for the week — their parents will love the week off.

Once you hit the beach, you'll discover the old saying is true: Babies are chick magnets. The women will love them so much, they'll probably offer to come to your room at night to take care of the kids for you. You get all the fun with none of the hassle.

And if the kid has a pacifier ... well, I don't need to tell you what kind of fun you can have with a pacifier.

Obviously, some spring-breakers will want to avoid the crowded Mexican beaches. The next best destination? Nevada.

I'm not talking about gambling — you're blowing enough money going on spring break without hand-feeding it to a machine.

Besides, the idea that gambling is fun is

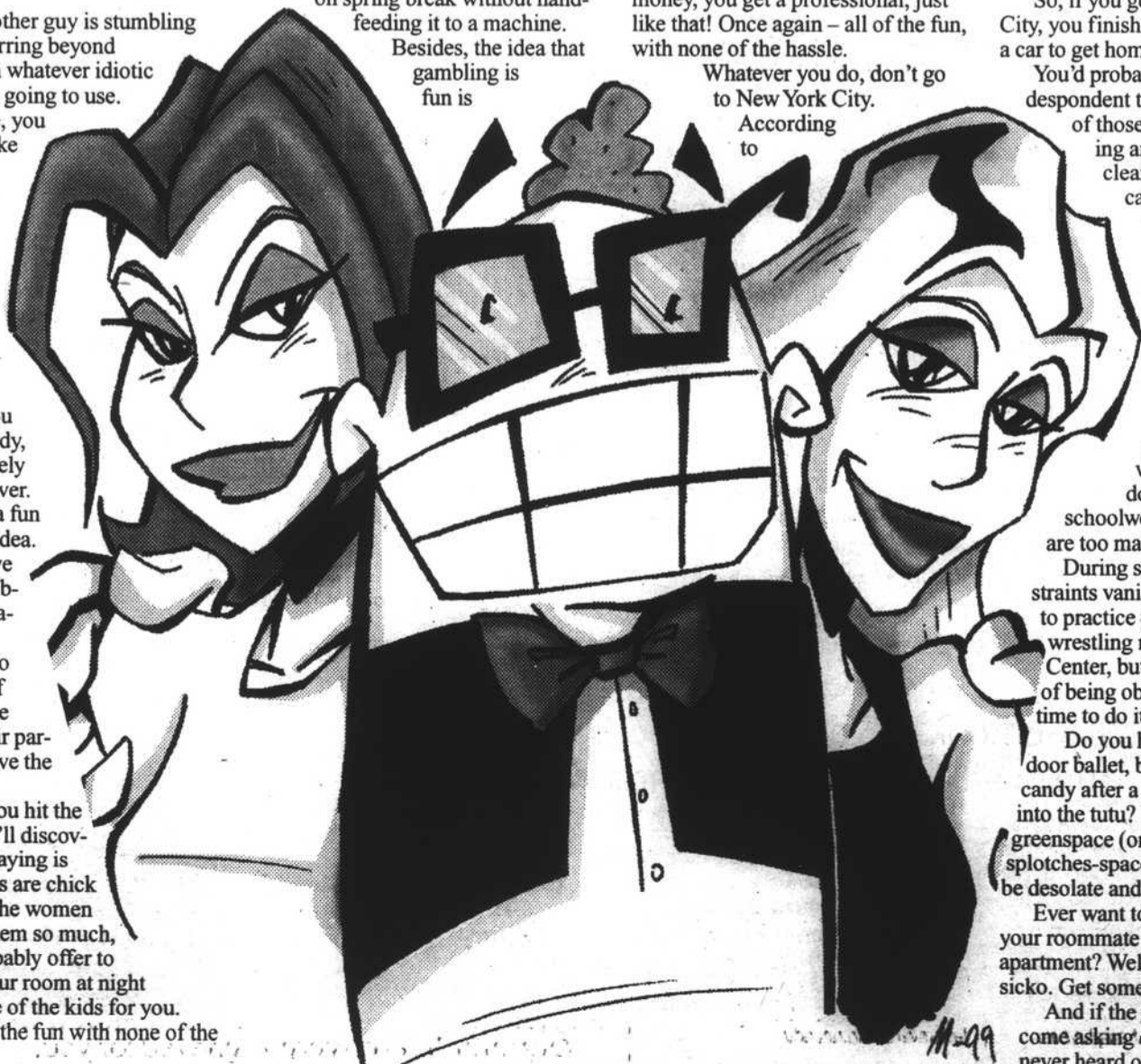
actually just a myth that sprung up out of the Spanish Inquisition.

Prostitutes. I'm talking about prostitutes. They're legal in Nevada, guys! Why even go through the trials and tribulations of trying to seduce a fellow spring-breaker? (They're there to have fun, not to be with you.)

Letting you do your thing with her is a prostitute's job. You pay the money, you get a professional, just like that! Once again — all of the fun, with none of the hassle.

Whatever you do, don't go to New York City.

According to



*Newsweek*, cops in New York now take possession of your car on the spot if you are caught driving under the influence.

I'd like to think that everyone would heed my advice not to drink, but I know better. I'd be almost as happy if everyone just wouldn't drive after drinking. But, sadly, I know better than that, too.

So, if you get caught in New York City, you finish spring break without a car to get home in.

You'd probably become so despondent that you'd become one of those "club kids," fashioning an outfit from vacuum cleaner accessories and calling yourself

"Thyra." Not pretty.

For some, the best choice of spring break activities will be to just stay around here. Yes, it's true.

Think of all the things you'd like to do on campus or where you live but don't, because you have

schoolwork or because there are too many people around.

During spring break, all constraints vanish. Ever get the urge to practice your crabwalk on the wrestling mats in the Rec Center, but decide not to for fear of being observed? Now is the time to do it.

Do you have a passion for outdoor ballet, but look like cotton candy after a stroke once you get into the tutu? Don't worry. The greenspace (or white-and-muddysplotches-space) near the Union will be desolate and open for business.

Ever want to be free to just wear your roommate's stuff around the apartment? Well, don't. You're a sicko. Get some help.

And if the men in white coats come asking questions, you've never heard of me.