

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Defining devices

Meaning of "candidate" allows room for politics

So let's think hypothetically.

Before we get to it, though, a bit of history: Last week, with the definition change of one word, the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska made it possible for student government to take a stand on political issues.

ASUN's newly passed bylaw redefined the word "candidate" and was necessary after the Student Court ruled, just days before, that the old definition wouldn't allow ASUN to take issue stances. Political stances.

Let's think about the definition of "candidate," and what our ASUN "candidates" have looked like in the past. Visualize.

Now, let's get back to that hypothetical question.

Imagine a new form of the ASUN candidate. Imagine a conservative student running in the face of the fervent liberals that make up at least 50 percent of the current ASUN governing body.

Imagine this student running on a different platform – not one of lowering Pepsi prices or increasing student football seating – but one of them being anti-abortion. Or pro-death penalty.

Imagine this candidate running a campaign full of the superfluous issues that don't really affect anyone on campus but are the big two or three that get people elected.

Now imagine this student appealing to the silent but strong conservative student voices on campus who, in the past, have stayed that way. Imagine this candidate going to Navigators meetings or walking around East Campus – up to now a virtually untapped vein of many conservative students – lobbying on the abortion issue.

Then imagine this student winning the ASUN presidency. Imagine this student being seen as having a "fresh voice" in a campus sick of hearing about DOMA and fetal tissue research.

Imagine this student winning with the votes of a mere 900 students he or she rallied together because of two or three political issue stances.

While we aren't saying this situation is good or bad, in fact, we do think it's worth some thought.

Some good things, hypothetically, could come out of this very situation.

More students would likely vote. A lot more.

More people would care about ASUN. More people would read the Daily Nebraskan. More people would listen to debates.

But would they be caring for the right reasons?

We don't know if we want our ASUN elections to become political. We don't know if we want soapboxes and party lines and debates and stances. But we do know that after last week, ASUN potentially has the power to alter the process.

It's just up to someone to come along and make that change. We're surprised it hasn't already happened.

And actually, it seems as though we may have changed a lot more than the definition of one word last week. We may have changed the definition – and direction – of the future of student government at UNL.

Think about it.

Editorial Board

Sarah Baker, Bradley Davis, Josh Funk, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Dane Stickney, Kimberly Sweet

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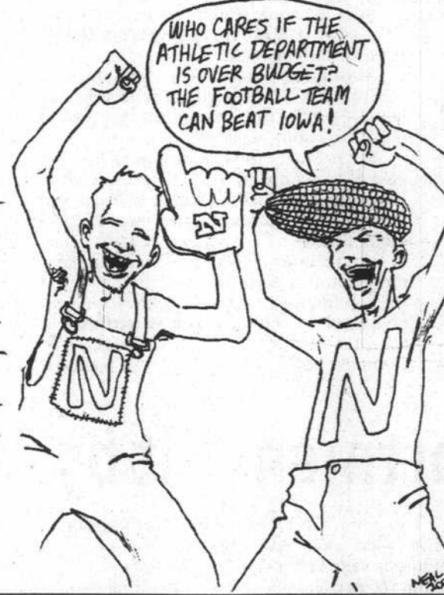
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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FOOTBALL PLAYERS RUN BUSINESSES...



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FOOTBALL RUNS UNIVERSITIES...



Neal Obermeyer/DN

U.S. Military unwieldy for new wars



Seth Felton

The question has been everywhere: "Is our military ready?" The Washington Post, NBC Nightly, even old George Dubya have brought the issue to the fore.

The worries focus on our equipment. Much of our armaments – jets, battleships, and lighter arms – are aging and may soon need to be replaced. This will incur major cost in the coming years.

Many of our troops are also housed in sub-standard living quarters and do not earn a sufficient salary. Some have been forced to go on food stamps to make ends meet. Morale is low, and several branches have had considerable difficulty in filling recruitment quotas.

All of this points to a decline in military. Al Gore would argue that the military is in top form, but he would be wrong. As much as I hate to admit it, Bush is right.

So how do we fix it? This is a major issue since, if all the military's stuff is broken, they're going to need new stuff, and you and I will foot the bill.

A solution exists, one that will make both sides – one that says military strength is vital and one that decries its excesses – shut up. Consider the following:

The current standards by which military readiness is judged are those of the Cold War, which are based on the military's ability to fight a two-front war.

Since (News flash!) the Cold War is over, it's time to re-evaluate those standards, updating and modernizing our military to enable it to better fight the types of wars the Pentagon predicts for the coming decades.

We discovered in our most recent mission to Kosovo that our forces are slow. It's difficult to get a 70-ton armored tank anywhere very quickly. These and other arms are slow to mobilize efficiently.

This is a damning liability given the nature of war in the post-Cold War era. Our wars are no longer Vietnam's, lasting for years, but Iraq's, lasting a couple months.

We need a streamlined military, one that can access East Timor, Kosovo or Rwanda quickly and simultaneously.

It has been suggested that the U.S. military would be more effective in this endeavor if it were streamlined to a \$60 billion force, rather than the cumbersome \$258 billion giant we currently fund.

Which means cutting off the fat and putting money into mobilization rather than heavy fire power. It means sufficient pay for all troops, and no more contracts to build gargantuan battleships that are judged to be in danger of capsizing (talkin' bout the Reagan years, folks).

An added bonus would be all the money saved, which instead of making bombs for our humanitarian missions (a bit of a contradiction), could be put towards relief for displaced refugees, rebuilding countries ravaged by war and even ease a little misery here as well.

It's a radical idea. There's been all this talk about "rogue" nations and how we need a \$50 trillion missile defense system to keep North Korea, Iraq's and (I dunno) Libya's three warheads away from us.

The fact is, that argument doesn't hold up, and I'm tired of this latest Pentagon excuse for wasting money on a doomed project. North and South Korea just marched together in the opening Olympic ceremonies under a flag of unification, and there have been rumors of unification (with North Korea accepting the presence of U.S. troops). I don't think they're too anxious to bomb us right now. They've got better things to do.

Iraq? C'mon, give Iraq a break. The infrastructure of the country, decimated by the Gulf War, is still woefully inadequate. Thousands die each year from the lack of sanitary facilities and malnutrition. The country is in no shape to wage war against us.

These threats are exaggerated, and the potential for change underestimated. As the world's only superpower, our actions send strong messages. Right now, we send a message of mistrust and intimidation with our top-heavy, destructive military.

Let's send the message that we're ready for more trust and cooperation among nations, committed to human justice first and petty disagreements and fears last. It might even be the first step towards real peace. Who knows until we try?

The military is ready, but it is inefficient and wasteful. It's time to rethink the system.

Letters to the editor

A flawed system?

NU on Wheels: A University of Nebraska student is at a party, and has drunk way too much to drive himself or anyone else home. So he does the responsible thing, he calls NU on Wheels (475-RIDE).

The woman who answers on Saturday Sept. 23 at 2:05 a.m. asks his ID number, his name and address, and then refuses to help because he does not have his student ID with him.

Why is this? A UNL student tries to be responsible and is basically told to take his chances and drive home because he doesn't have his ID with him?

Shouldn't we re-evaluate our "wonderful" program to make sure it is really helping the students who want to be helped?

Patrick Heese
Industrial Engineering
Senior

A sign of the times

As a gay rights activist, I would like to personally thank Josh Harshbarger for his letter regarding the decision by Abel Residence Association to display the Allies placard (Sex symbols, Sept. 21). He makes the point of many gay activists very well.

Because people are willing to compare relationships with other humans – who just happen to be of the same gender – to those with farm animals, it is necessary to take greater measures to validate gays and lesbians as people.

Mr. Harshbarger's touching conclusion to his let-

ter is a laudable claim. Ideally, there would be no need for any signs. However, people still have a hard time understanding why gays and lesbians are attempting to validate themselves as people – not get special attention or rights – simply being treated equally which must begin with equity.

So why are gays and lesbians so special? Aren't all minorities discriminated against?

Yes. But the difference seems clear to me: Gays and lesbians are not protected by the non-discrimination policies of most public institutions as is just about every other minority.

Same gender couples do not receive the same health benefits as their heterosexual counterparts. Further, it is still considered "morally justifiable" to not associate with – or even hire, for that matter – someone who is a lesbian or gay because of one's religion.

Does anyone recall slight blemishes in U.S. history like slavery and Jim Crow laws? How about the Holocaust? Guess what? They were justified on the grounds of religion, too.

The next time you feel oppressed, discriminated against or less valued solely on the basis of your heterosexuality, clearly record it in your journal because I guarantee it will not happen often. As soon as gays and lesbians can say that, that is when extra measures like posting symbols that really mean something to many people will not be necessary.

Andy Schuerman
Marketing Education
Senior

No room for gay blood donors

"There are more things, Lucilius, that frighten us than injure us, and we suffer more in imagination than in reality."

—Seneca, Epistulae ad Lucilium

I remember filling in the little circle next to "YES" on the questionnaire. I did it with some trepidation, but my girlfriend at the time (a med-tech student) had assured me that they would simply ask me some additional questions.

Once I explained my answer, she said, everything would be fine. I know now that studies show many people lie on these forms. Because of pride, morality or some mixture of the two, I decided to be honest.

With even more trepidation, I handed the form to the nurse and sat down across from her at a little desk screened off from everyone else in the gymnasium. She had a little card ready.

"What type of blood are you?" she asked. I could never remember, even though every time I went they told me. I still can't remember. "O" maybe?

It's amazing that I can still recall that G.I. Joe No. 54 (a comic book I bought almost 14 years ago) has a picture of Flint on the cover, firing a machine gun while parachuting from a burning plane, but that I can never recall one of the most important facts about myself.

She made small talk as she pricked my finger with a little gadget, waited a minute or so, looked at it and then wrote the results down on the card.

"OK," she said. "Just let me look at your form and then we'll get started."

Her finger trailed down the page, and she tapped at each question and its answer. About halfway down she lifted her finger up to tap and it stayed there, as if suspended from a string. She had a confused look on her face. She looked at me and then looked down to read the question and its answer again.

She pushed the paper across the table so I could read it.

"You answered 'yes' to the question: 'Have you ever had sex with another man, even once, since 1977?' Is that right?" she said.

"Yes," I said nervously, but remembering Kitty's advice. "But it was always safe, and I've tested negative each time."

"I'm sorry," she said with a sigh, "but that's grounds for permanent deferral."

She looked sincerely apologetic, but mindful of her duty. "We really do appreciate you coming in." There wasn't much else to say. I got up and left. I was a little angry but mostly embarrassed. Kitty had been wrong, but not without good reason. She'd given blood several times and always answered



Jeremy Patrick

"yes" when asked if she had ever "had sex with a man who's had sex with a man since 1977."

After explaining that it was always safe, they had gone ahead and let her give blood. We had assumed the same rule applied to men, but you know what they say about the word "assume."

Last week, the FDA's Blood Products Advisory Committee considered ending the ban on gay blood donations. The American Association of Blood Banks (which makes up half of the nation's blood banks) proposed the change because it felt that the ban was discriminatory and unnecessary to keep blood transfusions safe.

Predictably, the Red Cross opposed the change. In law school, we sometimes ask whether certain laws are overbroad or underinclusive. The current ban on gay blood donations is clearly both.

It is overbroad because it considers a man who has only had safe sex in a monogamous relationship as the same kind of risk as a male hustler. It is underinclusive because a man or a woman who has had unprotected anal intercourse with a member of the opposite sex dozens of times is not even asked about the practice.

Perhaps in 1985, when the ban was first adopted, it made sense. But now, enormously accurate nucleic acid tests can detect the presence of HIV within 20 days after infection, and the traditional "risk groups" have changed: Heterosexuals are the majority of new HIV infections in this country. (Omaha World-Herald, Sept. 13, 2000)

As the safe-sex advocates like to say, "It's not who you are but what you do."

James Petty, director of an equal rights group, said it well: "HIV is a disease that affects all people. It's particularly prominent in the African-American community, and we're not saying African-Americans can't donate."

"It's increasingly prominent among women, and we haven't said women can't donate. It's an old stereotype that has long passed any period of usefulness. It's presumed that if you're gay, you're a carrier of STDs or AIDS." (PlanetOut News, Sept. 15, 2000)

On Sept. 15, the FDA committee voted 7-6 to retain the ban.

On Sept. 20, the Associated Press carried a story with the headline: "Red Cross Appeals For Blood Donors."

Apparently, blood donations are decreasing about one percent a year, while the demand for blood is increasing by the same amount.

According to the article, several hospitals have been forced to postpone elective surgeries due to lack of blood, and the Red Cross has only a three-day supply in its national inventory.

"The nation's blood supply is in danger," said Red Cross President Dr. Bernadine Healy. "We need help now."

I want to help.
But I can't.