

Family matters

Taking a stand against 416 empowers Nebraskans

While eating dinner with family and friends in Omaha one night, a knock came on the door.

The family's eldest child was one member of the Daily Nebraskan's Editorial Board; her best friend, another member of the board, was there, as well.

The woman knocking on the door was a neighbor who lived up the street.

She held a clipboard and pencil in her hand, and the daughters in the family smiled at the woman. They both baby-sat her two daughters years before. She smiled, too.

Then she asked the family to sign the paper in her hand, a petition supporting Initiative 416.

More than 100,000 Nebraskans signed this very same petition. This family, though, was different.

The mother and father said: "No."

The two daughters said: "No."

And the rest of the six on the Daily Nebraskan editorial board have said "No," too.

We advise you to do the same.

You see, those signatures are one strong reason why, on Nov. 7, we're going into the voting booth with heavy hearts but empowered hands—hands that will vote against the abominable 416.

The initiative's wording is simple. Easy to understand. Damning to all.

"Only marriage between a man and a woman shall be valid or recognized in Nebraska," it says. "The uniting of two persons of the same sex in a civil union, domestic partnership or other similar same-sex relationship shall not be valid or recognized in Nebraska."

The wording is careless. It's problematic, seemingly homophobic and, maybe worst of all, it exposes many Nebraskans for what they really may be—full of fear, hate and the kind of values no one wants to bring out of the closet.

The pro-416 camp attempts to sell the initiative on the idea that marriage—an old and sacred tradition, to be sure—would in effect be ruined if this initiative were not to pass.

One of its leaders, Guyla Mills, claims gays and lesbians can be "reformed," that she knows many who have been "reformed," and, at a debate held on the UNL campus, said people wouldn't vote for 416 because of religious values.

We don't believe any of this as far as Mills could throw us. And we bet that isn't far.

Many Nebraskans, we think, will most definitely vote for this amendment because they believe it is a moral issue. They will vote for it because they believe that gay people are sinners, that the Bible is the way, and they will also believe they are well-informed.

We hate to inform them of their confusion.

You see, the initiative affects more than just gays and lesbians entering into civil unions.

It changes the way a father and son can run business. It affects families with gay and lesbian sons or daughters. It affects insurance, hospitalization and visitation rights. It affects self worth.

But more than all that—if that's even possible—it poses the question of whether it is right for the state to mandate a particular set of beliefs onto the entire populace of a state. Beliefs that some are ashamed to even have to vote against.

Moreover, it asks Nebraska if it wants to look like the backwater, dark-ages, small-minded, behind-the-times cornfield the rest of the nation thinks it might be. Don't let that be the truth.

Think about the domestic, suburban, upper-middle class fully functional, somewhat non-traditional happy family mentioned in the beginning of this editorial. Think about what they did. Then vote no.

Editorial Board

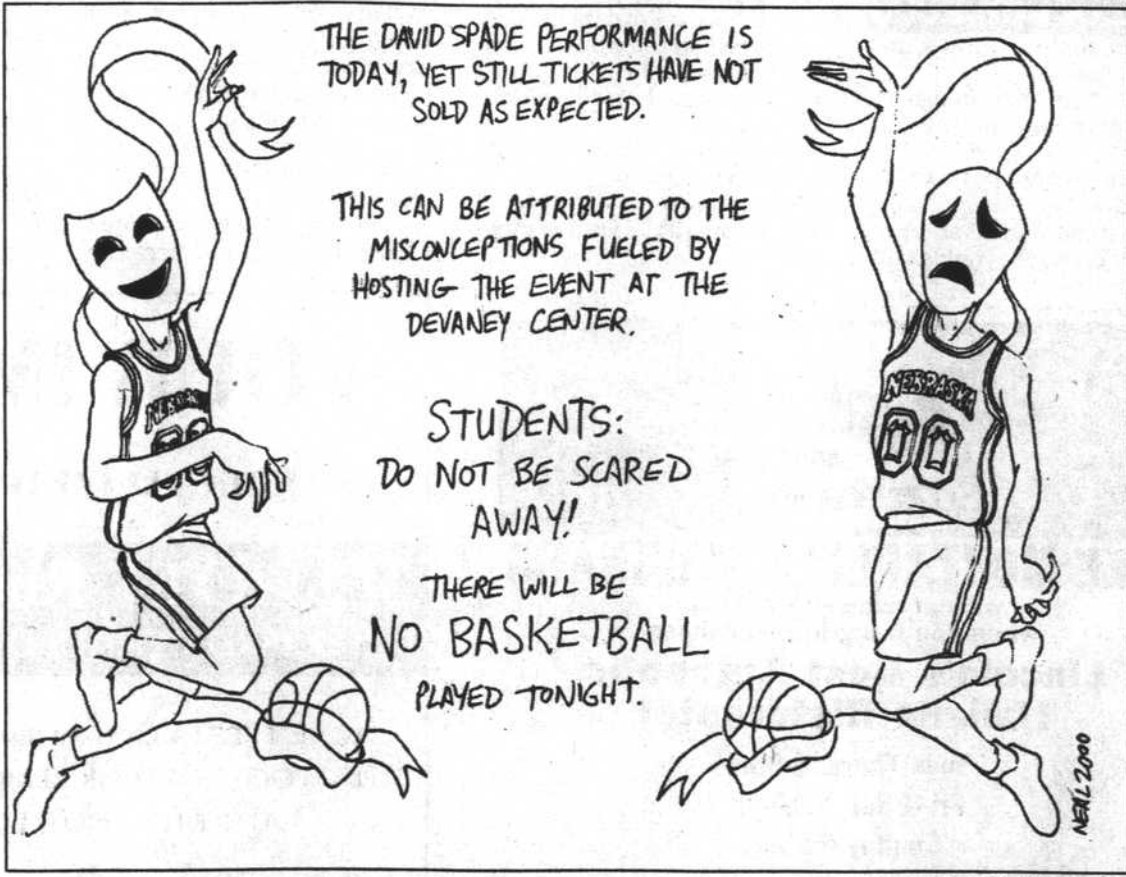
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A political primer for Tuesday

Election day is fast approaching (Tuesday!), and for those of you who are going to vote, there's a lot of junk on this year's ballot.



Seth Felton

So, here's a quick run down on some of the more pertinent (and bizarre) items. Be warned, I will make no effort to conceal my biases, but will at least attempt to provide some basic information.

Presidential ticket: If you don't know, if you're one of those pesky undecided voters, quit stalling!

If you know nothing about the candidates, bone up quick. Bone up like mad. Your choices are: George W. Bush (Rep.), Al Gore (Dem.), Harry Browne (Libertarian), John Hagelin (Natural Law) and of course Ralph Nader (Green). There are also two by petition, Pat Buchanan and Howard Phillips.

Vote for your favorite. You know how I feel (Go Nader!).

Senatorial ticket: Ben Nelson or Don Stenberg. Not an easy choice. Both leave a film like old sweat socks in your mouth. Basically, if you're against gay and abortion rights and for a Bible in every classroom, go Stenberg. If you're not comfortable with all that, as in, you want more grainy, harmless mush in your senatorial diet, go Nelson.

Congressional ticket: Your options—Doug Bereuter, Alan Jacobsen or David Oenbring. I don't know how long Bereuter's been there, but as far as I know he hasn't done squat since he got in.

Vote Oenbring, just for kicks Congress needs a Libertarian.

Initiative 416: I know, anymore about this one, and your eyeballs will melt and drain out of your skull. Seriously though, vote this down. Your personal feelings on homosexuality can be put aside.

The wording of this bill jeopardizes any same-sex partnership or same-sex business venture, even between siblings. And, because this is the "Defense of Marriage Amendment," you have to ask: How exactly does rewording the Constitution defend this institution, no matter the wording?

Does Initiative 416 defend marriage from its true foes—alcoholism, poverty, domestic abuse and infidelity?

If I were to pose an initiative that read "Marriage is cool! Marriage is kick-ass! The monkeys at the zoo are brown and stinky," the "Defense of Marriage" would be comparable to the defense Initiative 416 will provide.

The firefighter thing: This is a bizarre local issue that has its origins in City Council politics.

Basically, last year the firefighters offered to provide ambulance service cheaper and faster than the previous service providers. The city accepted.

The previous service providers were pissed and started claiming that the city had mismanaged the bid process.

They proposed a charter amendment—adding a new article X-B which essentially nullifies the firefighters' bid. For those of you not native to Lincoln, this is the most confusing thing on the ballot. It's confusing for natives.

My opinion: Vote no on the charter amendment X-B.

And that's all I've got room for! Again, if you plan to vote, please get all the information you need on the issues, more than the meager chunks of partisan blather I've supplied here.

Get a sample ballot, call the election commissioner if you need information, read the local papers. Then go vote.

Correction

Because of an editing error, the word "faggot" was misplaced in Jake Glazeski's column on Wednesday entitled "Painful Questions Answered." The word can be found within quotes when Glazeski intended for it to be outside those quotes—implied by the speaker's tone, not said by the speaker himself.

tell us
what you
think



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Not pro-choice

Thank you very much for the endorsement of the Daily Nebraskan for my re-election to the House of Representatives to represent Nebraska's 1st Congressional District. I do appreciate it. However, I must respectfully disagree with the characterization of my position in this endorsement as being one of "pro-choice."

I am morally opposed to abortion and will do nothing to encourage its use. During my 26 years as a legislator (four as a state senator and 22 in Congress), I have always voted against the use of public funds for abortion, except to save the life of an indigent.

Furthermore, I have never sought and do not intend to seek the political endorsement of groups on any side of this issue. However, I respect the political role these organizations pursue in the upcoming election, and I am always willing to share my position with my constituents who contact me.

Doug Bereuter
Nebraska congressman
1st District

Bad association

In regard to Mark Buhrdorf's letter to the editor (Wednesday): Associating homosexuals with pedophiles is as absurd as calling all men rapists or all white people members of the Ku Klux Klan. (Though I am sure there are more people who belong to those groups than there are members of NAMBLA.)

There is a difference between two mature adult individuals in a consensual relationship and a person molesting a child, and there are plenty of married people who choose to molest children or animals or

who have even joined NAMBLA. Just because a person is married does not mean that they are of better moral character than anyone else.

Yes, it is your right to vote any which way you choose. No one is trying to deny you the right. It is even your right to defend (Confirm?) your sexuality in the Daily Nebraskan (as if we really wanted to know). And don't worry, there will probably never be legal same-sex civil unions performed in Nebraska.

The reputation of ignorance and backwardness in Nebraska will be upheld. You claim that you do not want to "sweep homosexuals under a rug," yet you do not want to give them any "official recognition" or let them have "advantages." Doesn't this sound a little contradictory at all? But enough about you...

As of respect of marriage, obviously more than 50 percent of heterosexual people who participate in the institution of marriage have little or no respect for it.

The supporters of 416 don't have to worry about homosexuals "attacking" marriage; us heterosexuals are doing a fine job of it ourselves. Perhaps we need more laws against abuse (physical, sexual, psychological) of spouses and children, infidelity, pornography, stupidity, etc.

There are real issues that people are choosing to ignore. Instead, a group of people are blamed for "attacking" marriage, as if they are the ones who caused all these problems. I'm not even sure how 416 is supposed to "defend" marriage or what marriage is being defended from. That is why I will vote against 416.

Makenzie Brown
psychology/pre-medicine
freshman

The words of petaluma

There's Cedra, the pool-of-blood girl, and Christianne, with her long blond hair. She wears this visor all the time; it's got a shoe company on it. I don't know why. She survives on a diet of Jelly Bellies.



petaluma
watson

They surround me on left and right, as I lay in my bed, curling my feet under the sheets.

"Have you heard the word of petaluma watson?" Cedra says to me.
"petaluma watson..." Christianne says like a parrot.

The word?
"The word," Cedra answers, though I haven't spoken a word. "of petaluma watson."

"of petaluma watson..." Christianne says again. Cedra sits down on my bed in the clinic; she crosses her legs and dabs at her eye.

"Have you heard?" she says.
I get it. Of Petaluma Watson.
"You capitalized it," Christianne says.

"They're all down," Cedra says.
What's down?
"The words."
"The whole name."
"All of it!"
"Not like me."
"Or me."
"She's been put to you for a reason."
"It's a sign."
"They placed her in front of you for something."
"For a reason."
What possible reason?
"It isn't for me to know."
"For neither she nor I."
"We just send the message."
"The whole lot of us."
"Everyone one of us here."
"The whole lot of us."
"As I am to puke blood and drool..."
"And I wear this visor."
"That's what's meant to be here."

...
petaluma watson. petaluuuuuuuuuma watson. pet pet pet pet. The first name gets caught and all jumbled up in the tongue, the last follows like this weak, little jeeppers. It's some name. Beats the mindlessness of Calgary Johnson.
I want to dig my eyes out because this means nothing to me. My brain feels like a tub of purple goo—it's moved past the jelly stage a long time before—and my purple sheets can't heat them back to solid state. Human Gumby matter. A plasti-cosmic joke.
I'd go down the hall, but the use of it throws into

question everything—Is it me going down the hall? Is who I meet meant to be? Is it chance? If I stay right here, was it intended? In my brain this thought of a quest drives me like a dirty gnat. To discover something of the mess this universe has suddenly become.

It calls me like I've been chosen to peek behind the curtain for all time; the golden girl, the child of perfection. Like all those eyes that never moved for me meant I was like supernatural, moving past them at a speed they could detect, regardless of my appearance. Like I've been floating between the lines of movement for awhile now. Like I'm still in the iceberg, but just far enough above water to see the spores nobody else can, to feel the walls breathe in lavender.

My world plays like a stage. The lighting seems obvious and dramatic. Rooms seem backlit. People talk to me at angles that provide the desired optimum effect upon me, and I talk to them at the same desired angles, providing the same effect. I speak in quips and phrases. I stop and start, leap over the boundary, slipping toward the goal line. The sequences play out in my head seconds before they occur, like I'm getting into character.

Like I am a character. Which is, quite possibly, just what I've become, or what I've always been, or what I'm turning into after all these years of shutting down and zoning out. I know me. I knew me, anyway. I had these memories, lists and faces, stops and starts, tears and joys. They haven't gone anywhere. They're still right here. But it's as though I've unframed, taken myself—or been taken—out of the picture, to somewhere behind it, or before it, or after it.

All I know is there's a frame. And I'm not in it any longer. For what greater good, for what purpose, remains to be seen, by me, by you.

I'm reading you, reading me.
And two questions I'm asking are this: What in the fuck does that mean? And why am I asking it?

The questions persist: And does this have meaning? Have I been lost in the midst of plot twist, of meandering references dropping you back into lost words from previous entries? Are my secret confessions an exercise in bloated generosity to myself?

Who is petaluma watson? Why do I know that name? Why have people, it seems in an alternate time, asked me if I was her? How many minds am I playing with here?

Or is it just me, being me again, locked inside the compartments of my own shitty little philosophy, trying to crawl my way out from my shitty little predictable tales of sullen, beautiful destined to rot in public view?

It's enough to make you want to throw up. And, well, as you can see, that's exactly what I've done.

I hear you petaluma watson.
I hear you.
Do you see this?
Do you see me?
It's time we met. Again, the first time, whatever. It's time.