

The Daily Tar Heel

97th year of editorial freedom

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A tax on fun Ticket tax may be answer for county

Chapel Hill concert and game audiences may be faced with an addition to already expensive tickets if a \$1 entertainment fee is tacked onto the costs. But instead of the money going toward the entertainer or to the Smith Center, the \$1 increase would generate the funds to help Orange County address areas of concern, namely education and social services.

Although the idea is still in the discussion stages, students and administrators have already voiced opposition, raising doubts about the need and the fairness of an entertainment tax. But many of those who would have to pay the tax use county services such as roads, the police and the rescue squad and should have to accept a part of the financial burden. And if similar taxes are implemented at coliseums throughout the state — the Greensboro Coliseum has already added an entertainment tax and Charlotte is seriously considering it — the Smith Center would be protected from entertainers deciding not to perform in a more lucrative venue.

It's more important to examine where the tax will be placed and how the additional revenue will be used. As Smith Center officials have noted, the entertainer sets the prices for events, not the auditorium. Out of that price, the Smith Center takes out overhead fees, with the rest going to the entertainer. This makes it impossible for the Smith Center to add the additional dollar to the ticket cost. However, if all the major coliseums are taxed by their respective counties, then the entertainer could be responsible for raising the price to make up for the lost revenue which would otherwise come out of the profits he makes. Unless the entertainer wishes to lose \$1 per customer, his only option would be to raise the price, since relocating the performance

board opinion

to another site in the state would be useless.

The Orange County commissioners have not decided where they would use the money from the tax — which could yield up to \$700,000 — but the two most prominent considerations are education and social services. Both of these areas would be worthy recipients of additional funds, and the commissioners deserve praise for making an effort to address them. Commissioner Stephen Halkiotis also said he would consider giving part of the money to the rescue squads and police forces that are heavily used during big events such as UNC football games and Smith Center concerts.

Opponents argue that the tax would be unfair since many of those who will be forced to pay it do not live in Orange County — a sort of taxation without representation. They describe the fee as a way for Orange County residents to escape a property tax. However, while those who attend UNC-based events already bring in large amounts of revenue through restaurant and hotel costs, many still use county services for free. UNC students are big consumers of Orange County services, and although student fees should not be increased for an entertainment tax, students should also bear a part of the burden. Residents already are living in the most expensive city in the state, and should not be subjected to more financial penalties.

Nobody likes to pay any more than he has to, but sometimes governments have no other means to raise needed funds than levying taxes. An entertainment tax, which in effect would be paid voluntarily by individuals who choose to buy tickets, is more progressive than the alternatives, such as property taxes. An additional dollar would raise money for worthy causes in the county. Although it does not sound too entertaining, it is necessary.

A lighter solution Rail system better than new roads

Although it may be too late to stop the construction of unnecessary — and harmful — roads in and around the Triangle, at last some alternatives are being discussed. As we move toward the 1990s, various traffic planners and transportation officials are considering two light rail systems, and it's time for legislators to get on the ball and support such a system.

In the last session of the General Assembly, legislators spent far too much time discussing a highways construction package and far too little time considering the state's other problems, including poverty and education reforms. As a result, this state will see massive road building in the next few years, followed by ugly, disorganized urban sprawl. Had the legislators stopped to think about what else they could be truly visionary, they would have put more money toward the development of economical, attractive mass transit systems. In the next session, legislators should be tested on this issue, and voters should consider their actions on transportation as a major issue in the next election.

The two light rail systems being discussed, which have been proposed by the environmental group Save the Water, and by seven members of local planning departments, use existing rail paths and roads, a resource long ignored. The planners' proposal would cost about \$500 million and run on about 50 miles of track from Durham to Garner, while the other proposal, called Triangle Express, would cost \$300 million and run for 60 miles from Roxboro (north of Durham) to Garner. The proposal is specifically designed to save the watersheds from further pollution as is almost certain from the proposed \$750 million outer traffic loops that will run through the watersheds of Raleigh and Durham.

The loops should handle traffic needs until

2010, but planning into the first decade of the next century is not enough. It's time to look further down the road. With the Triangle Express, which would include 16 stops that its creator says would get commuters around the Triangle in 30 minutes or less, development over the next 20 years would be focused, near rail stops, and development would not overtake this state's precious remaining green space. The argument that this area is too spread out to support mass transit will continue to apply so long as we continue to build highways and

allow the sprawl to spread. If we begin now with a light rail system to focus development in certain areas along the track lines, that argument will dissolve, and the state will see mass transit used effectively.

The other half of that argument says that because we are so spread out, mass transit will not pay for itself. But it seems obvious that the expensive highway system underway now will also not pay for itself. Again, eventually, the system will be an economical solution as future development is focused. This is where being a legislator with a vision becomes so important.

People who drive along Interstate 40 or, soon, along the expanded Highway 15-501 will see in no uncertain terms how we are ruining the landscape with development. While two extra lanes make a world of difference right now in traffic, they will not be enough. I-40, even with its median partially taken up by the new lanes, is still one of the most attractive interstates, bordered on both sides by flowers and trees. If we ignore suggestions for light rail, those flowers and trees will soon be eaten up by further development. Legislators this year did not have an overwhelming mandate for highway construction. Next year, let's give them a mandate for affordable, economical, easy-to-use mass transit. — Sharon Keschull



A breeding ground for corruption?

Political scandals have been rocking our nation's capital for about a year. Jim Wright peddling books to avoid honoraria rules, Tony Coelho making dubious stock deals, Barney Frank's staffer running a prostitution ring out of his Washington office, Gary Hart cheating on his wife and the latest scandal involving influence peddling for Lincoln Savings and Loan only reveal the tip of the iceberg of possible wrongdoings in Washington. Some sources in Washington say the press usually gives a politician one free scandal before they begin to probe. Senators openly have extramarital affairs without fear of public repercussion (if it's their first one) and there is an air of acceptance of rule benders as long as things don't get out of hand.

Where does all this madness begin? Are politicians inherently evil? Is the only road to success in the political arena a corrupt one? If so, the future politicians right here at UNC could already be cutting deals under the table in preparation for their big step into the big game of power politics. What's going on behind the scenes in Suite C? Some speculation:

Brien Lewis, respected student body president and inventor of such catchy programs as the Barbecue Plan, TDI (in the spirit of SDI) and FAT Force siphons student government money and people power to sponsor polls measuring his chances of re-election. The money is arguably well spent, though. Think



Chris
Landgraaf
Staff Columnist

of all the acronyms (like SCUM, Student Coalition for an Undergraduate Minor) we would miss if Brien graduated instead of running again.

Gene Davis, speaker of Student Congress and genuinely cordial gentleman, is shaving money from donations given for his future gubernatorial race for personal use. Rather than take exotic vacations with the campaign money, Davis is reportedly using the money to corner the hand lotion market so he can have an endless supply of the soothing stuff which relieves his right hand after a tough day of hand shaking.

Jeffrey Beall, Student Congress hell-raiser and library science grad student, received all his campaign money from his pet political action committee, SADD (Students Against Dewey Decimal). Beall denies allegations of influence peddling — he claims he really doesn't like the Dewey Decimal system because of its inherent bias against his favorite

books, such as "How to Have Mindless Press Conferences to Gain Publicity."

John Lomax, speaker pro tem of Student Congress, pays the media not to bring up his name in any articles because he doesn't want his name tainted before the upcoming student body president election.

Jurgen Buchenau, chairman of the Student Congress Ethics Committee, in a desperate attempt to regain power after his failed bid for speaker and foiled attempt to complete Canadian Brien Lewis' secret coup called DIS (Dictatorship of International Students), is pushing his book entitled "Hairdos to Gain Friends and Influence People" on constituents.

Sharon Sentelle, though not a member of the Suite C players, deserves investigation. As chairwoman of the College Republicans, she receives a stipend from the Democratic Party. The Democrats figure Sentelle will force disillusioned, intelligent conservatives to join Young Democrats by leading an organization which makes Republicans look ridiculous.

This is all speculation, of course, but college is the breeding ground for the real world, and the corruption starts somewhere. So next time you see your representative speeding around in her new Mercedes, find out the rest of the story.

Chris Landgraaf is a junior political science major from Atlanta, Ga.

Readers' Forum

Riot revealed animal behavior of students

To the editor:
I would like to express my feelings to the students and organizers responsible for the distribution of the Duke/Virginia basketball tickets.

First, to the students: Your animal-like hunger for a slip of paper may have been satisfied by charging across the line, but at the expense of utter chaos. When some students who may have waited only 10 minutes instead of 16 hours showed the maturity and mentality of kindergarteners by rushing the gate, the results were disastrous. I was swept up by the wave of students, scared to death. People could not breathe and their belongings were trampled by the sheer mass of humanity. A line exists for the purpose of order and

reason, a fundamental basic for children. I asked if the line would break as if began to curve back on itself but was assured by upperclassmen that their fellow "college students" always had showed respect and dignity — I guess a freshman was right, this time.

And in listening to a campus policeman feebly explain his reasons for the method of ticket distribution, it occurred to me that a 3:30,000-plus ratio of policemen to students was ridiculously ineffective. Since the number of people camping out swelled so large, I think a better method of organization would have been for the people to walk along the lines, handing out the numbers while the students stayed in their places. While this is degrading to us as adults, the behavior of some clearly merits this solution. I hope that the people who organized Saturday night realize how thankful they

should be that no one was hurt and that they realize the improvements that need to be made before the State game. And I hope that the students who turned the peaceful, festive, friendly scene into a hysterical riot realize the consequences of their actions.

LAURA BROWN
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History

Editorial Policy

The Daily Tar Heel's board opinion editorials are voted on by the board, which is composed of the editor, editorial page editors and assistant editor, and two editorial writers. The opinions reflect the board's majority opinion. Signed editorials do not necessarily reflect the entire board's opinion.

The Daily Tar Heel has three regular staff columnists who write once a week or once every other week. Their opinion also do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the board.

Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. When writing letters to the editor, please follow these guidelines:

- All letters must be dated and signed by the author(s), with a limit of two signatures per letter.
- All letters must be typed and double-spaced, for ease of editing.
- Letters should include the author's year, major, phone number and hometown.
- Place letters in the green box outside the DTH office in the Student Union annex.

Mosque criticism stems from unfair fears

To the editor:
On Nov. 8, I read an editorial in The Daily Tar Heel concerning possible plans to build a mosque in the Chapel Hill area ("Mosque controversy: Town should support Muslims' plans"), and the residents' responses to those plans. My initial response was a sad amazement at how easy it is sometimes to forget that this country was founded on a belief in religious freedom. The concerns voiced by the residents to the Muslim Student Association thinly disguise underlying fears of losing a perceived "homogeneous" integrity of the community. I want to respond to each of these problems cited in the article.

First of all, one resident complained of tree removal which would be necessary for the building of a mosque. I am therefore led to believe that this person lives in a home which was built without the removal of a single tree. May I also operate on the assumption that all churches in the area were likewise constructed without the removal of a single tree? I sense an imbalance here, considering that grand-scale tree removal is nearly always sanctioned for the building of yet another condominium complex. To this resident I suggest the following: Redirect your interest in environmental concerns by seeking a cause which addresses the good of the global community. Oppose the destruction of South American rain forests. And support religious freedom here at home.

Another issue raised concerns a parking problem. Since the building plans provide the mosque with only 11 parking spaces, residents are concerned with where the twelfth mosque-goer and following will park their cars. I do not know why the plans allow for only 11 spaces, but perhaps they could be expanded. What I would rather know is this: Will the construction of a mosque cause the first parking prob-

lem in this history of Chapel Hill, or have these residents just never tried to find a space to park along Franklin Street? Residents fear that mosque-goers will park on their streets. Streets are public property, paid for by the taxes of Muslims, Christians, Jews and others. And parking on residential streets is often an accepted norm in areas where adequate parking is scarce. To these residents I say this: Try channeling your energy into Chapel Hill's parking problem as a whole. Arouse interest in the construction of greater and less expensive public parking (but be careful not to suggest plans which would require any tree destruction).

The most pathetic opposition of all concerning the building of a mosque pertains to noise. Apparently the residents object to hearing the traditional calls to prayer. While I usually side with those petitioning against noise, the hypocrisy of this issue merits nothing but scorn. A call to prayer, even when amplified, is simply not loud enough to deserve such an uproar. As I write this letter, at home on Sunday morning, I hear the constant traffic of churchgoers and others outside my window. Soon I will be able to hear church bells also, a sound I have always loved. If plans to build a mosque are overruled on the grounds that the call to prayer makes too much noise, then I hate to think what other sacrifices will have to be made to preserve the quiet of the community. To begin with, bells must be removed from churches, and the Bell Tower on campus will have to be shut down. Car use will have to be restricted in areas where traffic is audible from indoors, not to mention car stereo use. Then motorcycles will have to be prohibited, as well as all outdoor gatherings, and with that kind of progress we will soon live in a world without the laughter of children. On the other hand,

such a noise ordinance would restrict the audible tomfoolery of Greek organizations, and the campus would never again be plagued with the hellfire and brimstone of the Pit preachers. However, when you object to the sounds made by one person or group of people, and seek to take away or limit their rights, you are simultaneously advocating the limiting of human rights in general, here in a country which was built on the foundation of freedom. And perhaps the most sacred right of all is the right to freedom of religious expression.

From what I understand, the Muslim Student Association is willing to accommodate the residents near the site of the mosque in any way it can. Accommodation must be a two-way street. Let's not have yet another embarrassing situation in which a minority group must work twice as hard to earn half of the respect and freedom which so many of us take for granted. I for one am proud to be in a country where I have exposure to people of other cultures, to their beliefs and ways of life. The "melting-pot" aspect of the United States of America has provided me with rich and beautiful experiences which I might not have had if the homogeneous integrity of the country were upheld to the degree suggested by some of the residents of Chapel Hill. To those who do not agree with me, and to those who are indifferent, I encourage you to expand your horizons. Let go of fears and misconceptions, and learn to appreciate all aspects of the freedom which America stands for. To those who share my vision, I ask you to lend your support in any way you can to the Muslim students and residents of this community.

LAURA VIA
Graduate student
English

The Daily Tar Heel

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Distribution: RDS Carriers.
Printing: The Village Companies.