

BOARD EDITORIALS

NO MORE FRIVOLITY

A local judge is taking a strong step to give local reporters and people in other professions protection from frivolous charges and lawsuits.

Americans live in a litigious society. In one sense, this is a good thing — if people believe they have been wronged or mistreated, they can bring their grievances before the courts. But as has been proven, the impulse to file charges or suits against others can easily get out of hand.

Thankfully, a local judge has seen fit to protect people in certain occupations from unnecessary legal skirmishes. Chief District Court Judge Joe Buckner, who oversees magistrates in Orange and Chatham counties, is working to filter out frivolous charges brought against police officers, journalists, teachers and paramedics.

Buckner told The (Raleigh) News & Observer that he wants the cases of people in these professions to receive review from the office of District Attorney Carl Fox before magistrates can file misdemeanor warrants.

Such a review would mirror a system already in place in Durham. It should cut down on the number of needless or unreasonable charges that come to fruition, and it should eliminate the public embarrassment of those who don't deserve it.

According to the N&O, Buckner's proposed policy comes on the heels of a Durham case in which an N&O reporter's potential source charged him with making harassing phone calls.

To a certain degree, people shouldn't have to deal with being harassed, especially at home. For example, by allowing anyone to add his or her name to the federal do-not-call registry, the government gave people a much-needed shield against telemarketers. A person's life need not be inundated with and interrupted by a steady flow of sales pitches.

But it's up to judicial authorities to draw lines where they need to be drawn. Journalists must feel free to call whoever they think would make a good source, for instance.

If reporters hesitate to try to contact potential sources for fear of being saddled with criminal charges, it will hinder the ability of the press to do its duty of providing fair, objective and complete news coverage for the public.

It's reassuring to see local judges affording people in particular jobs the extra protection they need.

NEW SCHOOL RULES

Recent complaints about autistic students being mistreated amount to a call for officials to adopt new policy for the state's public schools.

When lawmakers look at education, they usually focus on funding priorities, teacher certification and test standardization. Slightly lower on the scale are the needs of autistic children and other students who require special treatment in public schools.

It's time for N.C. legislators to pay closer attention to these students and to implement new guidelines or rules about how teachers treat them — because recent evidence suggests that some kids could use the help of policy-makers.

Kathleen Yasui-Der, a former teacher of autistic children in Chapel Hill, was charged in August with two counts of assault on a handicapped person, two counts of contributing to the neglect of a minor and child abuse. Earlier this month, Melinda Dawn Whitley, a Wake County teacher, was arrested and charged with misdemeanor child abuse for letting a student repeatedly bang her head on the floor.

According to The (Raleigh) News & Observer, the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities will ask the General Assembly next year to adopt a policy regarding how disabled students

in public schools should be treated, especially when they exhibit dangerous behavior. Instead of putting the issue aside, lawmakers need to set new policy that clearly outlines what teachers can and can't do.

It's important to note that both Whitley and Yasui-Der have maintained their innocence.

But regardless of whether either of them crossed the line in their treatment of students, the council has reported that it has received six complaints of mistreatment of autistic students in public schools since October 2003. There is a sound basis for state officials to get involved.

It's not a black-and-white issue. Although every student's safety and well-being is paramount in any school setting, there is the reality that having to deal with certain students to maintain an orderly learning environment can be extremely difficult for a teacher.

This isn't just a call for state legislators to "think about the children." More so, it is a chance for the General Assembly to improve North Carolina's education system and to provide much-needed guidelines for the relationship between teachers and students in the state's public schools.

THE FINAL STRETCH

It's been a good year so far, but students shouldn't let up or lose hope before exams — this period can make or break a student's semester.

Thanksgiving Break's come and gone, and we've come upon the last week of classes. This last stretch might seem hopeless for some and tantalizingly close to a finish for others, but regardless of situations or expectations, we should all keep in mind the timeless and perhaps cliché words of Yogi Berra:

"It ain't over till it's over."

The entire staff at The Daily Tar Heel is certainly aware of that. We'll be working to serve the University community with hard-hitting and relevant news through the first reading day, Dec. 7.

The time from now until the last exam is left for students to wrap up their semesters — we wish everyone the best luck in their academics.

We all have our own ideas about why we're at UNC, but even the most active students must begrudgingly acknowledge the fact that classes remain the basic premise of our being here.

Freshmen will get their first glimpse of a college grade point average in a few short weeks. They should have long cast off their jitters about being at a university setting by now and are true, embattled

college students.

Some might find it hard to believe those times are gone as they're slated for December graduations. We hope they enjoy their last days as UNC students.

Foreign exchange students are mere days away from packing their bags and heading back home, or to wherever their next destinations may be.

So as we head into this frenzied week of preparation and last-gasp input into students' brains, we wish everyone the best of luck in keeping academic, extracurricular and career commitments balanced.

After all, there's still a week left. A great deal can happen in a week, for better or for worse. Hopefully, it will be better for more members of the University community than not.

But it ain't over till it's over — and students struggling to pull up or maintain their class work have their final opportunity now to pace themselves before cramming season begins. Perhaps for some, that session already has started.

In any case, if you know any staffers for The Daily Tar Heel, give them a hug. We'll be here until Dec. 7. We need it as much as anyone else.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, and were reached after open debate. The board consists of six board members, the editorial page associate editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2004-05 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

Meet Chancellor Moeser at the Johnston Center lounge

TO THE EDITOR:

Ever dreamed about meeting the big man on campus? No, it's not Roy Williams but the chancellor of this University, James Moeser. If so, you are invited to an open house today with the man himself.

The chancellor's open house will take place from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the Johnston Center lounge. This is an informal event open to all students. If you have opinions on how this University is being run, suggestions for improvement or questions about why things happen the way they do, please take the opportunity to stop by and talk to the chancellor. Even if you just want a handshake and a cookie, please join us.

The Student Advisory Committee to the Chancellor is working hard this year to increase the chancellor's visibility and his interaction with students from the entire campus community, and we would greatly appreciate your support.

We hope this event will provide a venue for students to share their ideas with the chancellor. Bring your questions, concerns and ideas today. Refreshments will be served.

Amon Anderson
Member
SACC

Alexa Kleysteuber
Chairwoman
SACC

Women's athletics need the UNC student body's support

TO THE EDITOR:

We both recall the early days of Title IX.

One of us, as a field hockey official, had to threaten a forfeit when encountering an unsafe, remote, unmowed and rutted football practice field as the venue assigned for a varsity field hockey match.

As a district school Board of Education trustee, one of us had to confront an athletic director who tried every scheme to ignore the provisions of the new law.

However, the intention of those who campaigned for and created Title IX was not limited to participation of women in school and university sports. It was hoped then that men and women would jointly support those teams with attendance and interest. With few exceptions, we still have a long road to travel.

Case in point: UNC women's basketball. Student attendance at the games is at best unimpressive.

Twenty-plus among Carolina Fever, a dozen or two in the pep band, eight cheerleaders and a smattering of friends and roommates are about all the student body can muster for a women's basketball program ranked fifth in the nation.

At a recent NCAA playoff field hockey match between Duke and then top-ranked UNC, the Duke contingent outnumbered the

Carolina fans. Volleyball attendance is about the same. Occasional women's events draw larger crowds, but the fact that a malaise exists is apparent to us.

Even extraordinary UNC women's sports programs will always be threatened unless they are supported by the student body and the University community at large.

Part of the problem lies with The Daily Tar Heel and the local media, which pitifully limit coverage of women's athletics in general. But much of the cure lies with the student body, male and female, who are missing truly exciting spectator experiences on the playing fields and at Carmichael.

Gene Gurlitz
Employee
Finley Golf Course

Judy Gurlitz
Employee
Finley Golf Course

DTH article poorly portrays UNC's research scientists

TO THE EDITOR:

In 300 words, the inaccuracies, irrelevancies and one-sided "facts" on which last week's article about People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals was written can't be adequately addressed. Hopefully, The Daily Tar Heel will soon report on the real issues — the University-wide overhaul regarding the improved use of animals.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"The final end of government is not to exert restraint but to do good."

RUFUS CHOATE, LAWYER

EDITORIAL CARTOON



MARLETTE
TALAMONSEE DEMOCRAT
dmarlette.com

"WE'VE TAKEN ON THE WARLORDS IN AFGHANISTAN, AND THE INSURGENTS IN IRAQ, BUT WE DON'T HAVE THE TROOPS TO TAKE ON THE NBA FANS IN DETROIT!"

COMMENTARY

Administration blocks out the challenges to its beliefs

It finally got cold enough here last week that I had to bring in the last of my pepper plants. I'm always amazed by the difference between the frail seedlings I set outside in April and the sturdy plants that develop after a couple of seasons in the garden.

What had been a spindly stalk too weak to resist a mild breeze is now robust enough to support a dozen peppers hanging from its limbs. I sometimes wonder if pepper plants could use slogans — what doesn't kill them only makes them stronger.

Ideas are kind of like that, too. As our views get buffeted by the winds of dissent or scalded by criticism, we must work to reshape and strengthen them. Lacking substantive challenges to our beliefs, we might never realize their flaws or recognize how to improve them further. In fact, this free exchange of ideas has long been a staple of strong democratic societies.

I'm mixing gardening with philosophy here, and I only claim expertise in the former. John Stuart Mill seemed to know something about the latter, however, and he agrees with me pretty well.

Pointing out the loss suffered by those who silence dissenting views, Mill wrote in "On Liberty," "If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."

Much like my garden peppers that grew into viable plants only after suffering through seasons of wind and rain and sun, truth also must face adversity in order to thrive. As Mill put it a century and a half ago, "It is only by the collision of adverse opinions that



DAVID HAVLICK
OVER THE HILL

the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied."

All of this makes me rather worried about the prospects for solid ideas and truth in society today, most particularly in the White House and the U.S. Congress.

In his first four years in office, George W. Bush has appeared almost exclusively in front of rigorously screened audiences. He's held fewer formal press conferences than any president of the television era. Throughout the recent presidential campaign, Bush's handlers worked assiduously to maintain the partisan purity of the presidential crowds.

At some venues, access was allowed only to people who signed oaths of loyalty to the Republican Party — and at least once, police led suspected protesters to a location miles from where Bush was actually going to speak. However anti-democratic these measures might seem, they pale in effect when compared to the chilling moves that Bush and Republicans in Congress have made since Nov. 2.

Since the election, a half-dozen of Bush's top appointments from his first term have announced plans to step down. Of the proposed replacements for these positions to date, Bush has turned exclusively inward — to trusted friends and longtime associates whom he can count on not to question his policies or even to voice dissenting opinions.

As the circle of advisers draws

ever more tightly around him, Bush increasingly guarantees that only his version of the truth will be considered. With a second-term agenda targeting major domestic issues including Social Security and the tax code, Bush's ideological insularity will no doubt make us yearn for even the mild voices of opposition we've heard the past four years from the likes of Colin Powell and George Tenet.

It's becoming apparent that dissent and its strengthening properties will need to wait for another time and different leadership.

Down the block in the U.S. Capitol Building, we see a similar trend taking shape. One of the first measures approved by congressional Republicans was the lifting of an ethics standard they had adopted in 1993. In what can only be viewed as a crass effort to protect the job security of House Majority Leader Tom DeLay — who might be indicted by a Texas grand jury for political corruption — the GOP retreated from its position that no member under indictment could hold leadership positions.

This not only gives a glimpse into GOP leaders' assessment of DeLay's chances before the grand jury, but it also speaks volumes about how unwilling these officials are to hear other perspectives.

In the wake of the elections, we might have hoped to see revitalized Republicans turn toward strengthening our democracy, engendering free discourse and embracing the populace that ostensibly elected them. What we see instead is a pitiful retraction from honest debate and oversight, a weakening of democratic principles and a series of moves motivated by fear and insecurity.

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be placed on any life, animal or human, but with careful research attuned to minimizing animal discomfort, researchers can help so many more than they hurt — to ignore this and to try to stop animal research truly is inhumane.

So think twice before judging, and learn all the facts. Thanks.

Robb Giddings
Senior
Chemistry

Attention

Applications are now available for spring 2005 columnists, cartoonists and members of The Daily Tar Heel's Editorial Board.

The forms can be found at the DTH front desk in Suite 2409 of the Student Union and are due by 5 p.m. on Dec. 3. If you have any questions, please contact Editorial Page Editor Elliott Dube at edube@email.unc.edu.

TO SUBMIT A LETTER: The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Publication is not guaranteed. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 2409, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail them to editdesk@unc.edu.

Some examples are that the University exceeds federal standards established by the National Institutes of Health guidelines, requires extensive training for all animal handlers, created a local committee to impose stringent standards and invested tens of thousands of dollars and thousands of hours to establish a set of guidelines that would ensure proper animal use.

These efforts contrast with last week's article in which PETA portrayed UNC researchers, working in some of the nation's most prominent laboratories, as torturing animals next to sacks of grant money, heaped beside mounds of animal carcasses. PETA's justification for such a egregiously inaccurate view is an outdated video made three years ago, backed by rhetorically poignant quotes — all coming from biased individuals.

As a research scientist, I've seen my colleagues in tears because an animal suffered during their experiment. An animal's suffering hurts us, as researchers, as much as any caring human being, yet we consciously decide to continue our research based on the importance of the knowledge gained. That's an incredibly harsh burden to bear, and it pains me that PETA and the DTH can portray me, my colleagues and our work as atrociously as they do.

We are not monsters — we are saving and improving millions of lives. Granted, value cannot