

Possible death penalty study causes dispute

Supporters of moratorium cry foul

BY WHITNEY ISENHOWER
STAFF WRITER

A death penalty study proposed in the N.C. House of Representatives promises to examine issues such as racial disparities and innocent people on death row — but some worry the legislation could diminish support for a moratorium on capital punishment.

Rep. Linda Johnson, R-Cabarrus, one of the bill's two primary sponsors, said the spread of conflicting facts often accompanies the issue when it is brought up in the legislature — a main reason she's supporting the study.

"What we really need is a moratorium, because we've seen innocent people get the death penalty," she said.

"A study wouldn't get those folks off death row." The N.C. Coalition for a Moratorium is asking for a two-year injunction on the death penalty in hopes of ensuring that no innocent people are sentenced.

Supporters of the moratorium say it is pointless to study the penalty without halting executions while doing so.

David Neal, executive director of the Fair Trial Initiative, said fixing the death penalty is impossible if the state practices it while trying to repair it. "We didn't fly the space-craft while we were working on it," Neal said.

"When you're inundated with pros and cons, you don't know which numbers are real."

Rep. LINDA JOHNSON, R-CABARRUS

Critics say the movement is an excuse to abolish capital punishment eventually.

"If you're going to be against the death penalty, just be against it," said John Hood, president of the John Locke Foundation, a Raleigh-based political think tank.

Some legislators say the debate about whether to conduct a study has been unnecessarily prolonged.

"The study could have been done in the past four years," said Rep. Phillip Frye, R-Avery, who co-sponsored the bill advocating the study.

Hood said evidence exists that juries tend to value white victims more.

"What does appear to be true is that murderers of black victims are less likely to get executed," Hood said. "But data do not show that juries are likely to sentence people to death row because they're black."

The co-sponsors of the bill said they want the study to straighten out this conflicting information.

"We're making sure that everything is covered by the law as the process is being conducted," Frye said.

Johnson said she thinks a study could only make the issues clearer for everyone.

"I'm looking for unbiased, factual information," she said.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Group to take up issue of student-teacher talks

BY LIZ STANLEY
STAFF WRITER

A city schools' task force committee will need more than a No. 2 pencil to pass the upcoming test it faces.

The 20-person committee — comprising one school board member, five teachers, principals and parents — will meet today to discuss a local issue that also is affecting the entire nation: teacher-parent communication.

"There has been a long tradition of encouraging and supporting interaction between parents and teachers," said Lisa Stuckey, head of the committee and chairwoman of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education.

But after teachers began reporting problems with a small number of parents who consistently consumed much of their time, the board decided to take action.

"A vast majority of parent-teacher interactions are very positive, but there have been situations where teachers feel communication could have been better," said Kim Hoke, spokeswoman for city schools.

The district sent a survey asking

questions on the issue to teachers at each school. Their responses were due Friday.

Of the estimated 240 responses, a majority came from elementary school teachers, which might suggest that communication is more of an issue at that level, Hoke said.

The survey asked teachers what kinds of parent behaviors they found most helpful, which ones were not productive, how often they have had communication problems, the impact these interactions have had on their work and suggestions they have for improving the situation.

Using the teachers' feedback as a starting point, the committee hopes to establish guidelines parents can follow.

Of particular concern for teachers are unplanned visits by parents, which cut into planning and instructional time, Hoke said.

Under the new guidelines, if parents want to visit a classroom or meet with a teacher, they will know how to go about doing so, Stuckey said. Printed guidelines would be placed in student handbooks.

Stuckey said the committee's ultimate goal is to develop a teach-

er-parent communication policy the school board would approve.

"We want to make the partnership between parents and teachers better and more productive," Stuckey said.

Hoke said a majority of the committee's work will be done this spring.

Its efforts are only a small part of a larger, ongoing initiative in the district to improve workplace conditions for teachers.

During the fall, Superintendent Neil Pedersen convened a workplace conditions task force to address ways to improve the working environment for city teachers, including setting aside planning time.

Two weeks ago, during a two-day planning conference, board members discussed the task force's results. Out of their efforts, they made 10 recommendations, and officials created individual work groups for each.

The parent-teacher communication committee will meet at 7 p.m. today at Smith Middle School.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Choose the next DTH Editor

The Daily Tar Heel is seeking students to serve on the panel that will choose the editor of the DTH for the 2005-2006 school year.

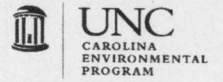
Deadline: Friday, March 4

Applications for the seven at-large positions on the DTH Editor Selection Board are available at the DTH Office and the Carolina Union info desk kiosk.

Applicants must be available for an orientation meeting from 6-7pm Thursday, March 31 and from approximately 8:30am-4pm Saturday, April 2 to conduct interviews and make the selection.

All students may apply for at-large positions except current DTH news staff members. If you have any questions about the process, please contact Michelle Jarboe (962-4086, mjarboe@email.unc.edu) or Paul Isom (962-0520, pisom@unc.edu).

UNC Undergraduate Environmental Programs Open House



Rosenau Hall
Second Floor Lounge

6:00 pm Wednesday,
March 2, 2005

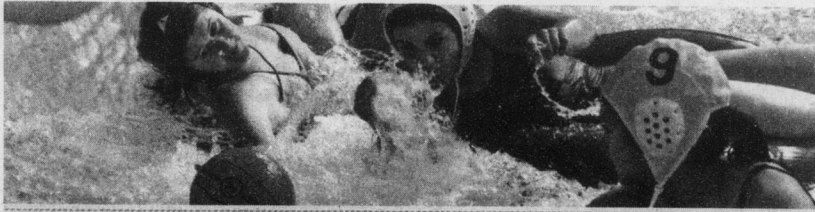
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For more information about the event, or directions to Rosenau Hall Second Floor Lounge, please contact Greg Gangi at the Carolina Environmental Program, 962-9805 or ggangi@email.unc.edu

Coca-Cola. CAMPUS RECREATION UPDATE

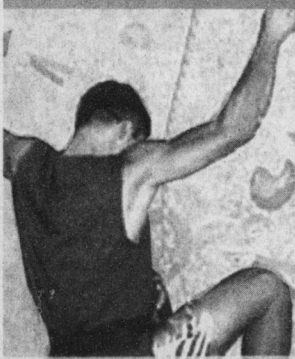


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TEAM TENNIS :: 4 Players
INNERTUBE B-BALL :: 6 Players
Sign up: Feb. 28-Mar. 8



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[belay certification required]
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DAY HIKE
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April 9, 2005
Sign up in 203 Woollen

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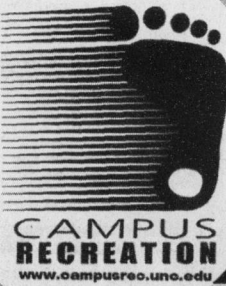
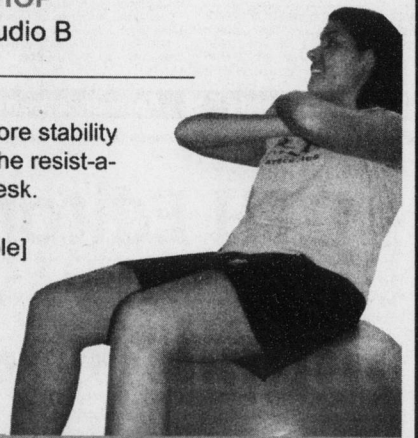


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