

BOARD EDITORIALS

A LOTTO QUESTIONS

With a state lottery to fund education on the path to becoming law, it is crucial that N.C. legislators solidify their new budgetary priorities.

Considering that the controversy surrounding a possible state lottery to fund education has been simmering for years, Wednesday's 61-59 vote in the N.C. House to pass a game was a minor shock.

The DTH Editorial Board isn't even that decisive: It remains split regarding the lottery issue, with four members in favor, four opposed and one abstention.

If lawmakers end up installing a game, it remains to be seen what will happen down the road. The game could be a boon to education in this state, or it could end up causing more budgetary distress and creating financial headaches for players.

One of the major concerns about the lottery is that it easily could turn into a vehicle through which the state exploits the poor. After all, though some people play the game for fun, many more partake because of the hard-to-resist chance to get rich quick.

And regardless of the demographics of participants, many opponents have a problem with North Carolina sponsoring gambling, even if it could mean a boost in education funding.

Thankfully, the drafters of the legislation took steps to protect potential players. One portion of the bill is particularly refreshing: "The only advertising of the lottery that shall be permitted is point-of-sale advertising and advertising on the premises of lottery retailers."

This segment of the bill also prohibits lottery advertising from including cartoon characters or false information, from catering especially to children and from omitting the actual or estimated odds of winning.

These codified regulations should serve to reduce the possibility of people playing the lottery who can't afford it and should keep excess gambling to a minimum.

But the choices of beneficiaries from lottery monies and of new funding initiatives are somewhat debatable.

Of the lottery revenue not going toward prizes or

operational costs, 50 percent would be earmarked for the Public School Building Capital Fund and 25 percent would go toward college scholarships.

The direction of the remaining 25 percent has raised some eyebrows, and for good reason: There is no specific allocation.

The bill sets aside this chunk for an "Educational Enhancement Fund" that "shall be subject to appropriation by the General Assembly and shall be used to further the goal of providing enhanced educational opportunities so that all students in the public schools can achieve their full potential."

That's too vague.

If legislators are going to end up signing the lottery bill into law, they first should add more spending details and education priorities to this part of the legislation. Otherwise, they'll just be setting themselves up for future quarrels.

The More at Four pre-kindergarten program and a continuing drive to reduce class sizes across the state are good possibilities. But something even more worthy of additional funding is the state's community college system. It's fairly strong, in spite of lacking monetary support of legislators. With extra money going toward the system, North Carolina could get a leg up in the education arena.

In any case, if the lottery does go through to Gov. Mike Easley — and he has been the most prominent proponent of a game — state lawmakers should promise both themselves and their constituents not to use it as an excuse to reduce traditional education spending.

Legislators recently have had an annoying tendency to go back on previous funding pledges to get money quick in the midst of dire financial straits. Education always should be upfront and center for members of the General Assembly.

Now that they are on their way to establishing a controversial new revenue source, they must take extra care not to pinch from the pile.

DON'T USE THE STICK

Instead of looking for ways to punish them, lawmakers ought to be encouraging illegal immigrants to become citizens or legal residents.

State Sen. Hugh Webster, R-Alamance, recently proposed legislation that, among other things, would require proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency to receive government assistance or other public benefits.

Such a bill only would serve as a punitive measure against illegal immigrants. State legislators instead should seek to co-operate with federal efforts to legalize those people and to let them shoulder their part of the tax burden.

Although it is true that illegal immigrants are a burden on social service programs, denying them critical benefits would not help legal residents.

North Carolinians don't gain by denying children immunizations or keeping battered wives from seeking temporary help in their counties. Counties often provide education for teenage mothers in areas such as nutrition and prenatal care.

Webster's bill would not deny access for children to attend schools or for patients to visit emergency rooms. But it's counterintuitive to have sick children go to school and potentially spread their illnesses.

These services cost the state money, but they're still necessary. Forcing agencies to shuffle more papers isn't an appropriate way to deal with the problem.

Immigration is a national issue that should be handled through federal legislation.

Webster told The Daily Tar Heel that his bill goes against President Bush's immigration amnesty proposals — but state legislators shouldn't counter federal efforts to let people into the country who would contribute.

The N.C. senator's proposed legislation is counterproductive and should be given less weight than a move to create better ways to incorporate these immigrants as tax-paying residents.

Many immigrants surely would jump at the chance to become legal residents if they believed that they could do so without being jailed or deported — and that's why illegal immigrants should be given special work visas. By allowing them to work here legally, they would then have a greater ability to help support the system many of them use.

Perhaps more importantly, conferring work visas would allow officials to document immigrants — meaning that they would be subjected more easily to local, state and national laws, with all of the protections and penalties that fall under them.

Legalizing immigrants would lead to their paying taxes and fees. Furthermore, by knowing the whereabouts of those people who are here on work visas, it would be easier for the state to deport habitually unemployed or criminal residents.

Efforts to stop illegal immigration have been largely unsuccessful for any number of reasons. But fighting against the tide will get us nowhere.

By allowing immigrants to fill jobs that most Americans wouldn't consider taking, U.S. spending power will rise.

By integrating people who come here from other countries, this country can reap greater economic and social benefits than by punishing them for being unable to do something that they already want to do.

N.C. legislators should be creating proactive measures to deal with the illegal immigration problem instead of looking to pile border guard work onto local public service agencies.

Webster's bill is a step in the wrong direction. North Carolinians shouldn't and likely wouldn't support efforts to wall out people who are willing to make a contribution here.

The N.C. Senate should turn the bill down.

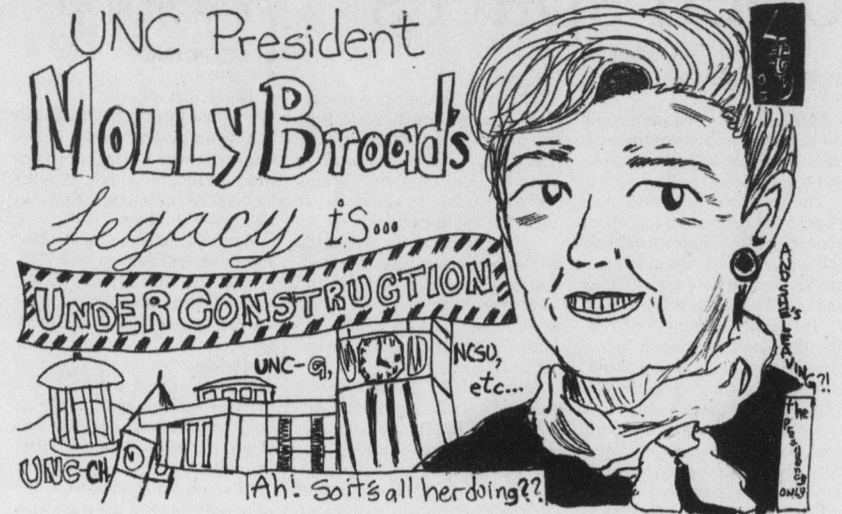
ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, PRINTER, WRITER, PUBLIC SERVANT AND INVENTOR

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Letycia Nunez-Argote, letyacia@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

A title is pure joy, but UNC is greater than its basketball

I am Bruce Weber's orange jacket. Seriously though, these past couple of weeks have been a blast.

There have been ample opportunities to avoid work: long evenings of watching our Heels take down yet another opponent, and even longer weeks devoted to reading every possible piece of analysis about our basketball team.

And of course, it all paid off. We're the champs. The best. The top of the heap.

But what does that mean? I went to the Dean Dome last Tuesday to welcome the team back from darling St. Louis and was amazed at the number of people who came out in support of the team.

There were the college kids, to be sure, but there were also people who looked like they'd taken off early from work, families with small kids and all manner of other people. And every single one of them hollered when good ol' Roy and his boys walked into the building.

Of course, introductions had to be made, and that No. 1 Heel, the inimitable Jimmy Meeze, ambled up onto the stage to bask in the roar of a crowd that couldn't care less about tuition hikes. He ate it up and nattered on about the team to more applause from the crowd.

Then he said that our team — our 2005 NCAA Men's National Championship team — was a metaphor for what makes this University great.

Pause. Oh, we cheered all right, because we wanted to get to the meat of the program. But I fell to thinking: Is our team really a metaphor for what makes this university great?

A longer pause.



TIMUR HAMMOND
HOLDING UP THE MIRROR

I grew up in Los Angeles, and college basketball was just something that came around every March when it was time to fill in the bracket at my Dad's workplace. Sure, there were a couple of hysterics when UCLA's Tyus Edny spun his way the length of the court en route to a national championship, but basketball was always somewhere off on television.

Imagine my surprise when I came out to Chapel Hill and met people who literally had grown up eating Tar Heel hoops with their breakfast. There was something touching about everyone's anecdotes about sneaking radios to elementary school to hear Woody Durham call Carolina games. There was something sweet about people's stories of when they knew that they, too, were Carolina fans.

This was all new to me, and you know what? It still is new to me. There are moments when this whole season feels scripted, like I'm watching and experiencing the whole thing only on television.

Then I walk to class and see the team posted up on the wall beside Lenoir, and there's a moment of dissonance. It's strange to feel that those players whom I read about in the news and watch on television are people who walk the same campus paths that I do.

Even when I'm talking with friends about "Sean" or "Melvin" or "Jawad" or "Rashad," it's not like we're talking about casual intimates whom we really know

on a first-name basis. It's like the names are shorthand for something bigger, something more outstanding than our little Carolina lives.

But the question is: What university do we share with our basketball team? If, as our dear chancellor suggested, our basketball team is a metaphor for Carolina's greatness, then our basketball team is Carolina. And I'm sure that plenty of people will be nodding their heads in agreement right now: This college experience is all about the game and nothing more. Our university is just as great as its basketball team.

So that's all well and good when we're winning, but take a moment to think how patently ridiculous this sounds: Our university is only as good as its basketball team.

I'm all for Carolina basketball. This has been a tremendous season, and it means something to me that we did win the national championship.

But the moment everyone starts explaining how this championship has validated our college experience, we've cheapened everything else that makes this university such a valuable and wonderful place.

Celebrate, yes. Be proud to be a Tar Heel, yes. Get drunk and holler along with 45,000 other people on Franklin Street, yes.

But say our college experience is somehow dependent on the winning of a national championship in men's basketball, as if men's hoops is the only sport that matters at UNC? Nope.

Congratulations to our team — but our team's success isn't the only thing that makes this university great.

Contact Timur Hammond
at thammond@email.unc.edu.

QUOTABLES

"Carolina basketball is the only thing that could make a man want to cry."

EHREN SHELTON,
FRESHMAN, IN ANTICIPATION OF THE MEN'S BASKETBALL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME.

"It's been what you would expect when you have six or seven parties trying to come to an agreement through a public process: messy, disconnected, characterized by the occasional miscommunication."

BARRY JACOBS,
ORANGE COUNTY COMMISSIONER, ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS TO FUND A LAND CONSERVATION DEAL.

"I see a ... Congress that is respected on campus, not a glorified piggy bank."

LUKE FARLEY,
STUDENT CONGRESS SPEAKER, ON HIS VISION FOR THE NEXT YEAR'S SESSION.

READERS' FORUM

Students now can apply for executive branch positions

TO THE EDITOR:

After Monday night's victory, there could not have been a better week to start our new student government administration. We want you to join the Dearmin administration as we tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities of the coming year. If you are interested in getting involved with student government next year, there are two important application forms now available on the executive branch Web site at <http://www.unc.edu/studgov>.

One application is for a variety of Cabinet positions, including committee chairs and executive assistants. The other application is for our external appointments to important University committees and leadership positions, including the Student Advisory Committee to the Chancellor. We urge you to apply for one or several of these positions. All applications are due April 15 at 5 p.m. It is going to be a great year, and we want to work with you to make students' lives easier.

Seth Dearmin
Student Body President

Elderly couple appreciates welcome on Franklin Street

TO THE EDITOR:

What a lovely surprise! It never occurred to us that we, because of our advanced ages — 80 and 77 — would

be honored guests on Franklin Street on Monday night after the big game. Over and over, students came up to us to thank us for being there supporting the school, the team and the students with our presence.

Over and over, we were asked if our picture could be taken alone or with another student. One young man came up to us and said, "I'm so glad you're here. This university is all about tradition, and you are keeping the tradition of Franklin Street alive." Another said, "I hope I'm still coming up here when I'm your age."

We will long remember that remarkable mass of young humanity — our well-behaved, enthusiastic students. We, alumni of UNC, are proud to have been part of Monday night basketball on April 4, 2005: a warm spring night when the University was so well-represented on the basketball court and on Franklin Street and where we were honored guests.

Charlie Browning
Chapel Hill

Margaret Browning
Chapel Hill

Neither side of the "choice" debate is great for women

TO THE EDITOR:

Several women's groups are staging a protest against the abortion images displayed on campus on the grounds that they are extremist and offensive. While their arguments

have some validity, individuals who support abortion rights need to see and understand exactly what an abortion is — in the same way abortion opponents must grapple with the issue of pregnant 13-year-olds.

My point is that neither side is that great of a reality for women. I believe women should be free from sexual assault, have access to birth control and have the right to say "Yes" or "No" to sex — married or unmarried — with men or women and without criticism. But I also believe women should not have to be ashamed of pregnancy — married or unmarried, planned or unplanned.

The part of the abortion debate that upsets me the most is that, much like the Jim Crow mentality, it divides us. We spend all of our time arguing over some peripheral issue instead of concentrating our efforts on the important ones.

And what are those? Access to comprehensive sexual education so that we can make informed decisions. Access to day care, health care; community support so that our choice is not one between a life of poverty or abuse for our child and termination. No one wants those choices.

I ask you, if you want to protest tomorrow, protest about the fact that extremists on both sides are blinding us. As a woman, I want more than just two choices.

Rebecca Chasnovitz
Junior
Public health

Demonstrators had no tact in using gruesome pictures

TO THE EDITOR:

The anti-abortion demonstrations this week were not only tasteless but also fundamentally disturbing. Signs warning of pictures of "genocide" could not have prepared hapless students to be confronted with numerous photographs of bloody and dismembered aborted fetuses.

Although these demonstrators had every right to their opinion, it was not in anyone's best interest to project these images onto a public that had no choice but to be subjected to them. There are better ways to reach an audience than to barrage it with such gruesome propaganda, and future activists would be wise to attempt to share their message without the use of such tactless ploys.

Melanie Hakar
Junior
Spanish

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.

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