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PERSPECTIVES

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Loaded and locked

Taking on the responsibility of gun ownership means being aware of the dangers

If a proposed gun control bill averts even one tragedy, it's worth it. Political rallies are eerily similar to high school pep rallies. That is, they are typically marked by people of dubious sincerity tossing upbeat sentiment to a pumped-up crowd.

And like high school pep rallies, political rallies rarely produce anything of consequence.

Last Tuesday's gun control rally, a hot issue both locally and nationally, was different.

At the rally, Gov. John Kitzhaber announced a proposal that represents genuine proactivity in the area of gun control. Senate Bill 317 would hold adult gun owners to a higher standard of accountability by holding them criminally liable when their unlocked guns are used by minors to commit crimes.

This liability is not limited to situations where someone is injured or killed. It also applies when a minor possesses the gun in a public place or exhibits it in a careless, angry or threatening manner. Violators found guilty of unlawful storage of a firearm would be subject to up to five years in prison and/or a \$100,000 fine.

It's likely that there will be significant challenges to Kitzhaber's proposal. The measure is actually very specific in its wording.

If passed, the law would protect gun owners from prosecution if their guns were used by a child in self-defense or if the weapon was securely stored away or outfitted with a trigger lock.

This bill will not end the problem of youth violence. It is doubtful that any government legislation, state or federal, could do that. But what the measure does do is acknowledge that there are layers of responsibility beyond who pulls the trigger.

The entire issue actually seems like a no-brainer. It's fine to have a gun, but if you leave that gun unlocked in a place where a child can get to it,



"I MIGHT BE WILLING TO FORGET ABOUT THIS LITTLE INCIDENT IF YOU PUT THE \$100,000 TOWARDS MY ALLOWANCE."

the least you deserve is some time behind bars. If that child uses your gun to kill, injure or threaten another person, then part of that is on your head.

Taking on the responsibility of gun ownership means being aware of the negative consequences that may result from that. It also means taking steps to ensure that those possible consequences don't come to pass.

In 1997, 26 minors were killed by firearms. Most of those guns were stored insecurely with ammunition and most were wielded by other

children. While this may not be a particularly jarring statistic, it stands as proof that there is a need for this kind of legislation.

Keeping a gun away from a child who is unstable or even just curious is a relatively simple task. If it takes an act of government and the threat of prison to get people to take these steps, then so be it.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Thumbs



To dining pleasure:
In an effort to relieve overcrowding, the Carson Dining Hall has extended its dining hours by 30 minutes.

To the Oregon Supreme Court:
The court visited the law school on Wednesday, providing students and the community with the chance to get up close and personal with the legal system.



To the loss of an American hero:
Joe DiMaggio, 1914-1999.

To hate crimes:
The recent murder of a gay student in Alabama recalls Matthew Shepard.

Letters to the Editor

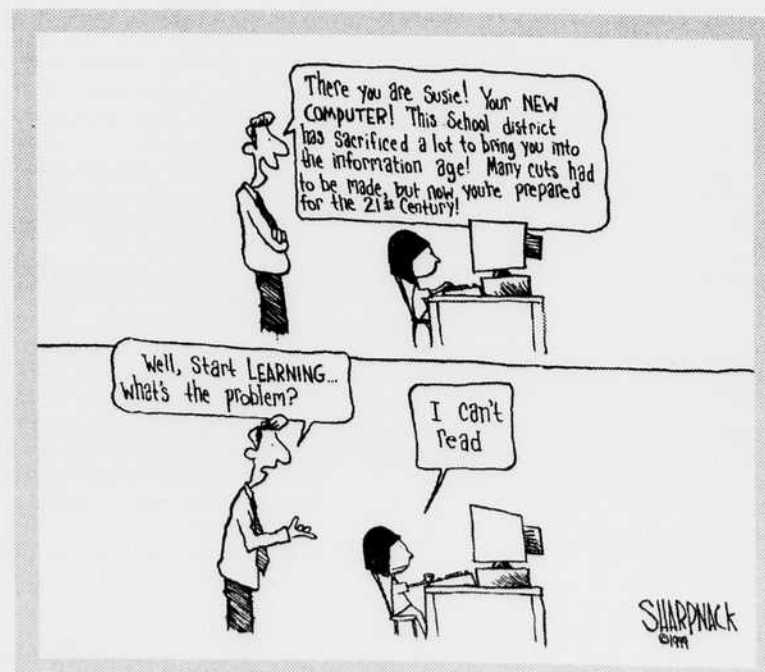
Greek tragedy

I am greek. What do you think? I know what you think. I think it, too. I have come to a harsh realization. They're right, all those people with their stereotypes, labels and discriminations. As a greek member, I would like to vocalize the frustrations from within the system. It only takes a few to ruin it for the majority. Understand that many of us, in many different fraternities and sororities, do not like the label we have received from the minority. Upon returning on a bus from a greek function, I wrote down many thoughts and would like to share a few of my frustrations.

As I sit in a yellow train of cowards and a meat market of high school, I wonder if I am right. Should I yell? What approach would be efficient? My voice, small and affecting minimal animals, has gained support from no one

tonight. Shall I continue, or close the mouth that has made me who I am? A product of society, beasts of insecurities, we try to gather all the fruit and share with no one. Like children, we want. Hold our hands and take us to the land of irresponsibility, the oasis of lust, Rennie's. Let us suck from the nipple of college and slowly debit our experiences. I have tried and will try no more, listening to the whines of the hopeless and degrading body of greeks. A diminished word, a petty degrading label suffocating those involved. I want off the Twinkie of lust, the meat market of young, away from the games of popularity. It is time to leave high school by the wayside. Am I a geek, a loser? Let me off the bus. I know what I want and will stand alone. Ride the bus without me.

Chad Wright
Spanish/Business



LETTERS POLICY

The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Letters must be limited to 250 words. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar, style and libel. Letters may be dropped off at EMU Suite 300.