

PERSPECTIVES

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The gun DEBATE

Closing loopholes in gun access is not a knee-jerk reaction to senseless violence, it's just common sense

It is unfortunate that it takes tragedies like the Columbine and Thurston high school shootings to make us realize that change is needed. After the shootings, people started to question themselves and everyone around them. This is how we grow as a society — how we learn from our mistakes.

Gun accessibility has come under scrutiny in light of these events, and rightfully so.

Certain state and federal officials, as they debated gun-control laws recently, would have everyone believe that gun-control laws are just an emotional reaction to random tragedies, which have little bearing on the status quo.

"God, guts and guns made America free," Rep. Carl Wilson (R-Grants Pass) said on the floor of the state House of Representatives when they sent SB 700 back to committee, which would have required gun dealers to preform background checks on potential buyers at gun shows.

These checks are necessary for one simple reason: Our society has deemed that violent criminals should not have a right to bear arms.

Where is the infringement on the Second Amendment the NRA is always whining about? Gun dealers are required by state and federal law to do background checks on buyers.

A loophole in this law has allowed people to purchase firearms at gun shows without the mandatory check. With freedoms such as the right to bear arms comes responsibilities, and individuals who break

the law lose certain rights and freedoms.

Gun dealers also have a moral responsibility to uphold the law and the intent of the law. In light of recent gun manufacturer and dealer liability suits, these two groups are now in support of the tighter gun control laws similar to SB 700.

But the NRA continues to voice a dissenting opinion. In fact, the NRA is guilty of a knee-jerk reaction in its continuing argument of the Second Amendment.

Bills such as SB 700 are just common sense and anyone who argues the Second Amendment is simply

not paying attention.

By opposing this bill, the NRA is endorsing the "right" of a gun owner regardless of the circumstances, even if the owner is a violent criminal.

The Second Amendment is a freedom that gives us the ability to protect ourselves, and no one is doubting the role that it has played in securing a democracy, but common sense must prevail.

However, we cannot cling to this right at all costs and infringe on a citizen's right to be safe from violence.

But Legislators in Salem and Washington are not making the distinction. They are having a hard time

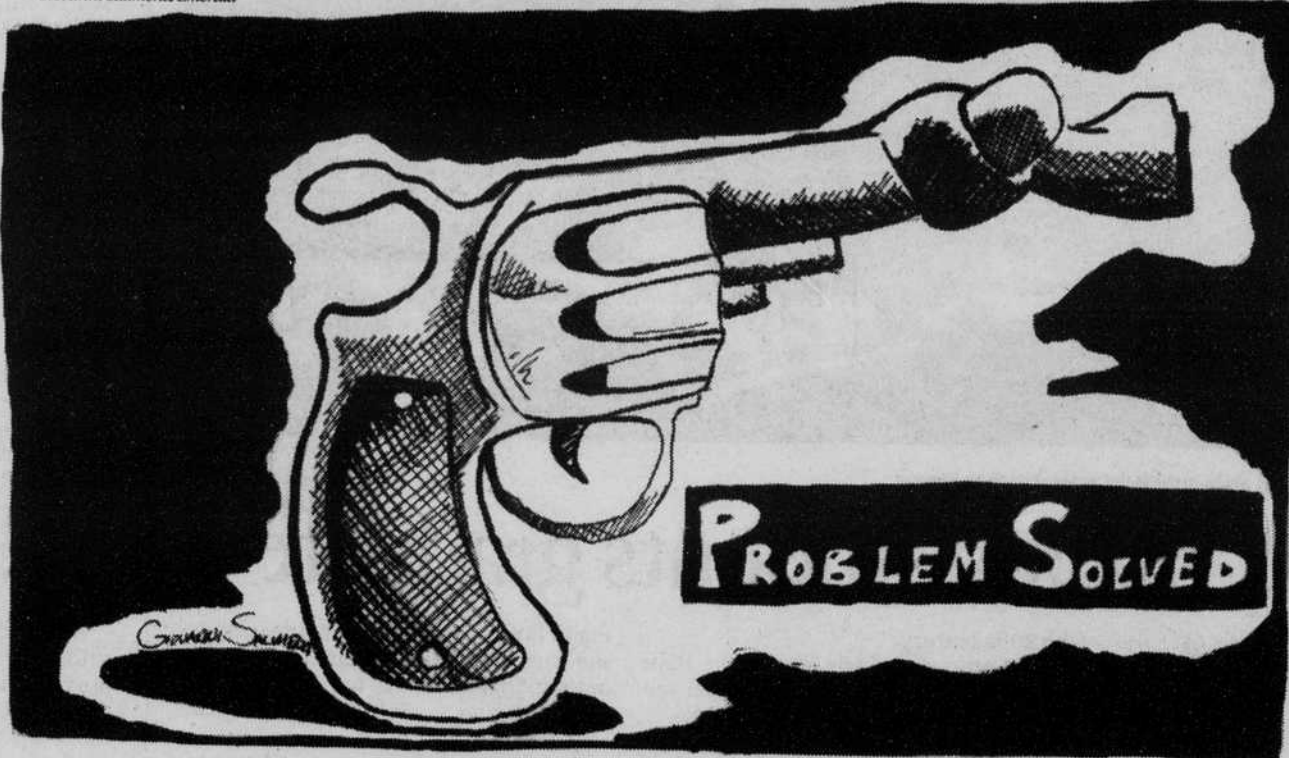
passing this simple bill.

We need to push for legislators to listen to their constituents and not succumb to the NRA's rhetoric.

Maybe a simpler approach is necessary to change the political stalemate over guns. Ken Kesey, a University alumnus and author of "One Who Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," was quoted recently as suggesting a ban on bullets because the Second Amendment doesn't say anything about bullets.

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

Giovanni Salimena/Emerald



Letters to the Editor

Issues overlooked

I am writing in response to a letter in Friday's Emerald (ODE, May 14), stating that those who oppose NATO bombing are "living in a world of idyllic pacifism."

I think the most important issue is the fact that people refuse to think critically about what NATO and the corporate media, which happen to be owned largely by military contractors General Electric and Westinghouse, tell us about the situation.

The United States and NATO have no humanitarian motivation when they choose to use force. The United States has shown time and time again that it is willing to use deadly force against innocent people to protect the interests of those with money and power.

You said we need to recognize the "evil" in Slobadon and stand up against it. This is just what the media tells us: that everyone the United States dislikes is "the next Hitler." I'm not defending Milosevic, but whenever you dehumanize someone you allow yourself to justify violence against them — the very violence which makes them "evil."

Please look at www.fair.org for unbiased coverage of this and other current issues, and please, start thinking for yourself.

Lucas Spiegel
Eugene

Ethical debate needed

The Emerald printed Joseph Nicholls' letter to ASUO Senator Michael Dixon (ODE, May 12), complete with the line, "A spade is a spade, and you're still a convicted felon."

That this should pass by Emerald editors is either ignorant oversight, or evidence of bad intent on the part of the Emerald.

If it is ignorance, educate yourselves: "spade" is defined in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as "Negro: usually taken to be offensive."

Offensive not only to African-American people, but everyone. Racial slurs have no place in the critique of the effect of criminal charges or convictions on a student's ability to maintain an elected position in student government, which is, I believe the grain of Nicholls' argument.

Racial slurs have no place at all, particularly at a public university, printed in a publication that receives student funds.

Slurs are meant to humiliate and subordinate and have the effect of silencing minority members of the University community.

Silencing voices impoverishes our University, our education. It halts dialogue necessary to achieve deeper understanding of issues.

As a community, we are the University; by coming here as students or educators we have made a commitment to engage one another in dialogue.

This is the primary mechanism of the learning

process, without which we remain ignorant.

I am here to learn, not to have a dominant view forced upon me through intimidation.

To Nicholls: Vitriol only undermines your argument, and you as a spokesperson. Dixon was convicted of a property crime. Calling Dixon a "spade," "felon," "thief," "violin" who "raped [his] constituency" are personal attacks at the University not only harms Dixon and diminishes your point, it also damages the quality of the University.

To Dixon: How you handle yourself in the aftermath of this public proceeding teaches us all. Your actions and your words are providing an important exploration of what it means to be a public figure.

To the Emerald: It's time to remember your role as a neutral forum for the exchange of ideas, not one that promotes the subordination and silencing of minority voices.

Marcy Miranda Janes
Graduate Student

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.

Thumbs



THUMBS UP

To greater accountability: The University Senate approved a motion to increase professors' post-tenure faculty reviews Thursday. Reviews will now be conducted every three years.

To Taking literacy seriously:

A bill passed the state House that would require 3rd graders who do not meet the minimum reading standards to repeat the third grade. It awaits a vote in Senate.



THUMBS DOWN

To poor fact checking:

The map service that provides the U.S. military with maps has a history of poor data and bad locations. The Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia was bombed by mistake when pilots consulted mislabeled maps.

To racial profiling:

A judge ruled recently in California that U.S. Border Patrol agents can consider ethnicity when making traffic stops. The controversial law enforcement method has been under scrutiny across the country.