

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Assisted-suicide ruling threatens patients' rights

Isn't it funny how Republicans love to preach sovereignty for states, except when they disagree with laws the states have passed? Attorney General John Ashcroft is trying to nullify Oregon's Death with Dignity Act, an assisted-suicide law passed by Oregon voters in 1996 and 1998. Ashcroft is bullying doctors and patients into following his moral values, and he needs to leave Oregon alone.

On Nov. 6, Ashcroft's Justice Department issued a letter to the Drug Enforcement Agency instructing federal agents to pursue physicians who prescribe lethal quantities of drugs to assist terminally ill patients in suicide. This new interpretation of the federal Controlled Substances Act overturns a 1998 decision by former Attorney General Janet Reno. Reno said the government did not have the authority to pursue or prosecute doctors.

The viability of Ashcroft's proposal is murky at best. He is merely quibbling over a few pills; assisted suicide opponents usually offer end-of-life care with sufficient prescribed medication as an alternative. But thanks to Ashcroft's action, it may become more difficult to offer higher doses of controlled substances. The loss of patient rights will have a chilling effect on pain care for all Americans facing the end of life.

The federal government is interfering with the will of Oregonians for no apparent reason. At a time when the country is supposed to be united in the wake of tragedy, Ashcroft is blatantly dividing America to fulfill his own moral agenda. Ashcroft and his hypocritical cronies are hurting the sanctity of democracy and needlessly angering a lot of people at a very inopportune time.

It's disturbing that Ashcroft would override the will of the voters in this way, and we hope that when Ashcroft reaches the end of his life, his choices aren't as constrained as the Oregon voters he's opposing.

Editorial Policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Poll Results:

Every week, the Emerald prints the results of our online poll and the poll question for next week. The poll can be accessed from the main page of our Web site, www.dailyemerald.com. We encourage you to send us feedback about the poll questions and results.

Last week's poll question:

How should the University deal with the Project Saferide lawsuit settlement?

Results: 70 total votes

Make Saferide vans coed — 39 votes, or 55.7 percent

Make separate male Saferide vans —

8 votes, or 11.4 percent

Make a separate program for males —

8 votes, or 11.4 percent

Keep it the way it is —

12 votes, or 17.1 percent

Don't know —

3 votes, or 4.3 percent

Wow. Most of our voters want the University to make Saferide vans coed. Perhaps the University can find a solution for Saferide without discriminating or putting the personal safety of both male and female riders at risk.

This week's poll question:
Do you agree with Oregon's assisted suicide law?

The choices:

Yes

No

Don't know

As I was walking past the EMU Amphitheater a couple of weeks ago, I saw an older man standing center stage with a wooden cross. He had his Bible propped open and was yelling to passing students that they had better come follow Christ and be saved, or they would go to hell. I've always found these sort of religious disputes interesting, so I decided I would stay awhile and let myself be amused by the bickering that was certain to take place.



Tara Debenham
Columnist

While listening to the man rant about being saved, I could hardly take anything he said seriously. The way he yelled out to no one in particular, even contradicting the very message of Christianity,

seemed almost comical. People began to gather around, and whether offended or just egging on the man, they responded by yelling harsh comments at him in return.

Based on what he was saying, I could understand why people might be offended. After all, it seems logical that if one bluntly tells someone they're going to hell, one risks offending them. Although I didn't let his words get under my skin, I did find the man's attempt at preaching the gospel rather pitiful.

I may be wrong, but doesn't the converting of someone to a particular faith involve something called "spiritual enlightenment?" I highly doubt if anyone in the crowd was feeling enlightened or even comforted by the man's message. Instead it only created bitterness with the people listening. He was attempting to win people over by invoking guilt and fear, which I think is an inappropriate approach to take in today's society.

Things only got worse when another guy appeared on the scene with a sign around his neck that said something along the lines of burning in hell if one doesn't follow Christ. The "burning in hell" part was nicely done, with red and orange flames coming off of it. I heard him say, "Come get your tickets to heaven," and he had little papers in his hand that he was trying to hand out. I had had about enough; to me this was more a mockery of Christianity than an actual attempt at spreading the gospel. Tickets to heaven? What is that all about? Do these people have nothing

Preaching up the wrong tree



Peter Utsey Emerald

better to do than come to the University campus to annoy students?

Yet, the irony was that both seemed to enjoy the contentious debate they were conjuring. It was almost as if they wanted people to yell harsh comments back at them. I could just see them thinking, "Yes! Send out your fiery darts oh, ye wicked ones! I will be a martyr!"

I had to wonder, do these men really think they are going to change anyone's outlook on life? The only thing they were doing was giving people more reasons to shun any sort of religion in general. They had the stereotypical preacher countenance of being better than "thou" and having the only "truth and light," which I think many people find irritating.

I'll admit that this sort of thing can be entertaining, but for the sake of those who really believe in Christianity, these preachers need to sedate their egos a bit, take a long walk and really mull over life's great questions. If they really want to extend anything like a Christian message, maybe they should volunteer somewhere and actually help the community. The preachers should take those nice wooden crosses and go build someone a fence, because as far as I can tell, they aren't doing any good on campus.

Tara Debenham is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. Her views do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald. She can be reached at taradebenham@dailyemerald.com.

Letters to the editor

China Blue being forced out

I am responding to your article about disputes between China Blue and the University Bookstore ("China Blue, University Bookstore working out insurance conflict," ODE, 10/19). The claim by the bookstore that China Blue is an unsafe operation is completely untrue. The fire of last year was quickly extinguished and caused no one any physical harm. The bookstore has also stated that it has had trouble communicating with China Blue. This is because the owners do not understand English well, resulting in times of non-compliance, and in no way reflects unwillingness to comply with the bookstore's requests.

China Blue feels that it has been bullied by the bookstore and pressured to leave because

of future plans for the space China Blue currently leases. China Blue's lease ends August of 2005 and will not be renewed, which has implications that there are future plans for the space. The bookstore has claimed that China Blue has defaulted on the lease, citing code and lease violations. The bookstore has also gotten city officials involved increasing the pressure on China Blue to comply.

I am sure that many restaurants in Eugene are violating city code and don't even know it. In order for China Blue to comply, it must spend thousands of dollars in upgrades. This is an enormous cost considering that there are less than four years on the lease. They are trying to make running China Blue so costly that we are forced to leave and vacate the space.

Ted Tsui
son of China Blue co-owner
Seattle, Wash.

CORRECTION

In a story about Holiday Market ("Homemade for the Holidays, ODE, 11/9"), the start date of the market was incorrect. Holiday Market will begin Nov. 17.

In a story about Academic Learning Services ("ALS offers tutoring options," ODE, 11/9), the location was incorrect. ALS is located in the basement of Prince Lucien Campbell Hall.

The Emerald regrets the mistakes.