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COMMENTARY

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Tuesday, November 20, 2001

Editorial

Federal screeners will ease travelers' sense of fearfulness

(U-WIRE) NORMAN, Okla. — Thanks to a late deal between the House and Senate that passed Thursday, airline security will be improved drastically. The Department of Transportation will provide security personnel to screen all bags. By 2003, all checked bags will be scanned for bombs. As it is, only about 10 percent of bags are now screened for bombs.

It's about time Congress came through with a package of some kind. While Congress has found enough time to give enormous cash giveaways to giant corporations and chip away at our civil rights to facilitate the Justice Department's investigation, it couldn't figure out a way to keep knives, guns and bombs off airplanes.

The two houses had been too mired in bickering to notice that security at the nation's airports was — and is — in exactly the same condition it was on Sept. 11.

The public is scared. If it turns out that Flight 587 was anything other than the accident it appears to be, the airlines will start seeing more empty seats.

The Thanksgiving holiday is crucial for the airline industry. If people don't fly over Thanksgiving, the airlines really will go under, and no amount of congressional gifts will keep them in the sky. It's all about confidence.

Even if we can never be completely safe, travelers need to feel as safe as possible. Only if they feel safe will they get on airplanes. And only if they get on airplanes will the airlines recover and help the economy take a step away from recession.

Oklahoma Daily (U. Oklahoma)

Correction

In Monday's article about Thursday's mail threat ("Mail incident generates mixed feelings on campus," ODE, 11/19), the condition of Willamette Hall was incorrectly stated. Only the ventilation system of Willamette Hall was shut down on Thursday in response to concern of a biological agent in the building.

The Emerald regrets the error.

CROSSING THE RED LINE

The American Red Cross has been taking hits one after another since Sept. 11.

First, President Bernadine Healy resigned, effective the end of this year. Her resignation was part of an ongoing dispute over the disposition of hundreds of millions of dollars collected by the humanitarian agency in a special account known as the "Liberty Fund."

The money was believed to be intended completely for the families of the dead in New York and Washington. Apparently, only a portion is. The rest was being spent on other Red Cross programs — all worthwhile, but not what the donors thought they were ponying up for. Now, the organization is allowing donors angered by the misexpenditure of their money to request refunds of their donations.

However, money is only half the issue. While there is a rightful anger that financial donations meant to aid the families of the victims have been mismanaged, a more precious donation seems to be on the line as well. I'm talking about the hundreds of thousands of pints of blood donated in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks. Here and abroad, people poured their hearts out, literally, in hopes that their blood might have kept survivors of the attacks alive. Now, we've been told that at least 10 percent, and perhaps more, of that blood will not be used to help anyone.

Being unable to secure freezer space, much of the excess blood was left out until it had passed its maximum 42-day shelf life. Now the organization has been forced to destroy what it couldn't freeze. The Red Cross claims that less than 10 percent of the platelets (the actual red blood cells that transport oxygen to cells in the body) have been destroyed, and none of the plasma, which is the liquid portion of blood that keeps for much longer at higher temperatures than whole blood.

However, the local collection centers are telling a different story, according to the Washington Post. They claim that quite a bit more, both platelets and



Steve Baggs Emerald

plasma, has been destroyed. Now, apart from the obvious public relations maneuvering to make the loss look much better than it most likely is, the fact is that the Red Cross is wasting perfectly good blood that could very well have been employed to save lives somewhere in America.

The Red Cross' largest mistake in this situation was allowing the donation centers to remain open even though they had more blood than they could safely handle. Yes, they didn't want to turn people away when those hundreds upon thousands wanted to do something to help. Yet it's worse to be told, "Well, we never intended to use your blood donation and left it to rot," than to come out and say, "We can't take any more blood, please give at a later date."

But by taking the blood and doing nothing with it, until it now has to be destroyed, they wasted their own time, the time of their volunteers, large amounts of money and another chunk of the goodwill of the American people.

I want to make it clear, however, that none of the preceding is meant to dissuade you personally from donating to or volunteering at the Red Cross. Even though it has made some missteps since the terrorist attacks — and destroying blood is a pretty egregious error — the Red Cross is still indispensable in disaster relief efforts the world over.

Pat Payne is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald. He can be reached at patpayne@dailyemerald.com.

Letters to the editor

University should recognize ASL

I was pleasantly surprised by the editorial demanding American Sign Language be accepted as a second language at the University ("Needing a decision on ASL now!" ODE, 11/05). This means two years of ASL would satisfy the language requirement for a Bachelor of Arts degree.

ASL is a three-part sequence taught by Johanna Larson-Muhr. Each year, she has seven beginning courses with 35 to 40 students each. Communication Disorders and Sciences offers one section each of intermediate and advanced ASL. Larson-Muhr has waiting lists for all classes.

The greatest obstacle to adding more classes and making ASL official is the University administration's ignorance. The administration doesn't feel this language has a culture.

I make a distinction between the words *deaf* and *Deaf*. The former word denotes the physiology of an absence of hearing. The latter represents the community, etiquette, history, politics and *language* that constitute a distinct cultural identity. Physiology is one component of Deaf cul-

ture. The other three are linguistic, political and social. Being deaf doesn't automatically make one part of the Deaf culture.

According to the University's mission statement, it is dedicated to "an acceptance of true diversity as an affirmation of individual identity within a welcoming community." Our academic community isn't very welcoming when its leadership refuses to acknowledge the existence of a Deaf culture. Making ASL an official language of the University would be the first step toward affirming the true diversity among deaf, hard of hearing and hearing individuals in this community.

Kent Neal
 senior
 sociology

Ashcroft's actions show cowardice

I am appalled at Attorney General John Ashcroft and Sen. Gordon Smith for effectively stating that the wishes of Oregonians aren't worth a bucket of spit.

Ashcroft made an injunction that makes prescribing lethal doses of federally controlled drugs illegal, nullifying the assist-

ed suicide law that voters in Oregon passed twice. Sen. Smith was also quoted in the Oregonian saying that he supports Ashcroft's actions and is willing to risk his political career to stand by them.

Ashcroft shows cowardice by using these actions at a time when the nation is preoccupied, and Smith is showing that he cares more about himself and his party than his constituents. Oregon has vowed to challenge Ashcroft's injunction to the Supreme Court, and I hope the Court will realize that it's not the federal government's job to curtail the power of a state, even if it doesn't like the state's policies.

Smith says he is willing to risk his political career for his belief, and I will hold him to that by not voting for him in the next election.

David Piper
 freshman
 political science

Get behind our ASUO president

It's ironic that our campus's main source of news warned Nilda Brooklyn and Joy Nair that they better shape up or they'll suf-

fer on the public relations front. It's also ironic that the Emerald's main criticism, that the two fail to conduct visible campaigns, fell on a day when an ASUO election voter's guide was nestled in its pages.

Perhaps few readers recall ASUO members as the most vocal students in opposition to the Emerald's sexist, insensitive advertising for Yahoo! last year.

I guess some media outlets choose not to "get behind our president," even if the president is elected democratically.

Maybe the Emerald could report on the ASUO's quest for a fair housing code in Eugene, or how our student government is fighting the "energy" fee, or take a stab at the real number of people who attended "Weaving New Beginnings."

Who's fighting for campus democracy at the University? Seems like it's our student government, our president and vice president.

The giant election box was for the national presidential election voter registration drive, not an ASUO election. Get your facts right, please.

Jeff Klein
 graduate
 planning, public policy and management