

COMMENTARY

Wednesday, February 6, 2002

Editorial

Think globally, defend locally

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, President George W. Bush has been prompting Americans to support homeland security, and he has introduced a \$37.7 billion homeland defense budget proposal to help protect our nation from potential acts of terrorism. This figure is up from the \$19.5 billion spent in 2001. Although it is admirable for Bush to be so dedicated to protecting the United States, his proposal wastes money that could be used to fix the government's internal security problems.

The Office of Homeland Security's mission — to protect the country from terrorist threats or attacks — is practically impossible to fulfill. Regardless of most of the security steps we're taking, determined terrorists will still find avenues to penetrate our country. Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City showed that some American citizens are capable of domestic terrorism as well.

America has created a plethora of government agencies whose duty it is to protect Americans from all forms of harm. If these agencies weren't spread thin financially in the first place, Bush wouldn't need to increase the domestic security budget. He wants to bump up spending on bioterrorism research, border protection and police and fire departments to help prevent acts of terrorism.

To his credit, Bush has proposed that \$3.5 billion be appropriated to help "first responders" such as firefighters, police and rescue squads. But he is also asking for \$10.6 billion to bulk up security at the nation's borders. While border protection is important, a better use of the allocation would be the reinforcement of local emergency response teams. If and when terrorists do infiltrate the country again, everyone at the local level should be prepared. Basic emergency equipment should be working, and local fire and police stations need to have the resources to protect Americans in the same manner Bush demands.

The National Guard, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Aviation Administration, National Security Administration and local law enforcement agencies should be capable enough to handle national emergencies without continuing to fund and operate the Office of Homeland Security. The Bush administration has been pumping emergency funds into this agency for months to help "protect the nation," but there have still been a number of high-profile security breaches.

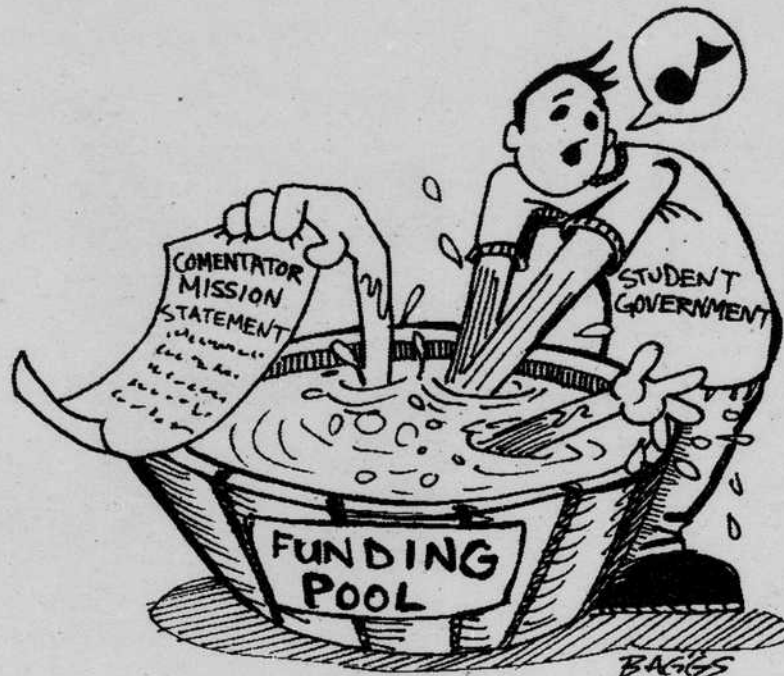
Airport security is one of the areas where security failures are most noticeable. Airports are continually being shut down because of faulty security equipment, causing delays and frustration for travelers and airport staff alike. After all of the rhetoric surrounding the decision to make airport security workers federal employees, improvement in security is coming slowly.

The Bush administration should do all it can to help protect the nation from any further terrorist attacks. However, Bush's \$37.7 billion homeland defense proposal would be allocated to the wrong cause if passed. We need to invest in the agencies that already exist instead of operating them on a shoestring. Protecting the nation against terrorism means funneling money to pre-existing agencies at the local and national level, not developing new security measures.

Letters to the Editor and Guest Commentaries Policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. 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.

Steve Baggs Emerald



Letters to the editor

PFC should fund 'twerps'

I thought I would write to talk about the PFC's decision to hold up the approval of the Oregon Commentator's mission statement. I don't think there is a problem with the OC's mission (other than opposing it on ideological grounds). Certainly, they do allude to conservatism in their mission, but that does not necessarily imply the OC serves the interest of any particular group.

Based on the Southworth decision, it was mandated the student fee allocation be done in a "viewpoint-neutral manner." In my opinion, the PFC is putting the burden of viewpoint neutrality on the OC, rather than acknowledging that this burden is their own.

To clarify, the PFC has the responsibility to allocate funds on the basis of a group's contribution to the campus community, and not on political grounds. I urge the PFC to reconsider their position.

Granted, I think the OC writers are a bunch of juvenile, bigoted twerps, but I think that dialogue on campus is, in general, better for having their publication.

Randy Newham

senior
anthropology and linguistics

Viewpoint neutrality explained

The idea of getting sucked back into the Dante-esque level of hell known as ASUO politics makes my liver twitchy. But I'm compelled to write regarding Monday's editorial ("Commentator staff should toe the line," ODE, 01/28). I've been an editor at the Commentator and a member of the Programs Finance Committee.

The editorial states, "the Supreme Court recently ruled that groups such as the ASUO Programs Finance Committee must maintain 'viewpoint neutrality' when allocating student fee money, in order to maintain an open marketplace of ideas on campus." This is gross misinterpretation of the Southworth case the Supreme Court ruled on. "Viewpoint

neutrality" means the process for allocating funds must be "viewpoint neutral," not student groups themselves. You can fund the Commentator, which is conservative, as long as left-wing papers have access to the same funding process.

The case against the Commentator is absurd; so long as the Commentator doesn't fund political parties or campaigns, it can state whatever mission it chooses (short of hate speech).

I'm baffled words such as "conservative" and "left-wing" are singled out by the PFC, yet no mention in the mission statement refers to utopianism. If we're going to take a hard line on value neutrality, the word "utopia" is a no-no. This standard would send everyone down the slippery slope faster than you can say "Res Ipsa Loquitur."

So leave the Commentator alone, and start hacking away at groups that genuinely violate rules about funding political activity (OSPIRG, cough, cough).

M.H. Hemingway
Class of '98
Washington, D.C.

Privacy policy issue misses the point

GUEST COMMENTARY

George
Fkiaras

In your recent articles regarding Internet privacy, there are three issues that were not fully examined: property, public vs. private information and motivation. In layman's terms, why on earth would a bunch of geeks residing in a nearly windowless tomb of a building care to violate one's privacy? Let's first examine what the Computing Center can and cannot do with the current policies that are in place.

A computer, network or any other similar device has an owner, hence the term "property." Like all property, the laws of this state and this country prohibit seizure or search of the said property without the consent of the owner. The Computing Center does not have the right to search a person's computer, nor the data that resides on it. No privacy policy drafted by the Computing Center or anybody else will alter or enhance this right to an individual's privacy. It is already guaranteed by the laws of this country.

Any information that people might have on their computers is private, and nobody can search it without probable cause. However, if the person makes part or all of that information public in some fashion, then any person or organization may legally examine it. For example, if a

person uses a program such as Morpheus to share files with other people, then those files are open for all to see, including the Computing Center. Once again, no privacy statement from them will change that, as the person has demonstrated in those cases that they want that information to be made public.

The University network is owned by the Computing Center. If a person transmits or receives any information over it, the Computing Center has every legal right to monitor it. If the data turns out to be copyrighted information, that constitutes probable cause for a search of an individual's computer.

With that in mind, the real issue is "why?" Why on earth would the Computing Center wish to target users who download copyrighted files over its network?

Surprisingly, the answer is not one of legality. The Computing Center is not a policing unit and never will be. Its mission is to ensure that the University network and university-owned equipment attached to it remains functional for its

primary purpose: to serve the research and academic needs of the University. What your articles fail to mention is that up to three-fourths of the network capacity at the University was, at one point, being used to download copyrighted files. The remaining capacity was not enough to properly serve its stated mission, so the Computing Center was obligated to do something.

In your editorial on this matter, you mention that people "should be trusted" in the manner they use the University's computing resources. Up until recently, the Computing Center turned a blind eye to applications such as Napster precisely because it is not a policing unit, and because those applications did not impede the network's primary function. But when excessive use of Morpheus and other similar applications started to get in the way of legitimate academic activities, the users of the University network clearly violated that trust.

Clearly, the Computing Center's action against those 250 or so people was not an invasion of privacy, but a restoration of our rights to legitimate academic use of the University's resources.

George Fkiaras is a senior computer information sciences major.