

COMMENTARY

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Letters to the editor

God celebrates all relationships

Thank you for an eminently sensible editorial supporting a domestic partner registry for same-gender couples. Why two people of any sex who declare their love and commitment to each other should be called an "affront to God" shows the narrow limits that some conservative people attribute to their God. My God is big enough to celebrate my lesbian daughter and my gay son in their relationships just as God cares for my two straight children in theirs.

A same-gender relationship in no way diminishes traditional heterosexual families; a law that fosters stability and equal justice for all can only be right.

Regarding the bathrooms for transgender people, I just returned from two months in France and found that in several situations, bathrooms were "uni-sex." Sometimes I didn't even know this, and it was a bit disconcerting for this 65-year-old woman to exit a stall and find a man standing at a urinal, but it made a lot of sense. Nobody seemed to see it as a problem; in fact, if I had a young boy with me, I might prefer to be with him in the bathroom.

We Americans are just too damn hung up on sex to look at things rationally sometimes. Here's hoping that the good people of Eugene will move several steps ahead of those in Houston.

Sue Null
Houston

U.S. gives unfair treatment to Canadians

Maher Arar, a Canadian engineer, was returning to Canada when he was arrested at a layover in New York on Sept. 26 and deported Oct. 11 by the United States to Syria. He avoided military service in Syria by leaving when he was a child with his family to Canada. Now he is missing

in Syria, probably in prison, perhaps being tortured to teach him a lesson.

This is against all international law. If deported, he should have been sent to Canada, or to the country he was last in, Switzerland.

Does the United States remember that Canadian officials hid U.S. embassy officials in Iran after the U.S. Embassy was stormed? Does the

United States know the job Canadians have been doing in Afghanistan to fight al-Qaida for the last year? Why is the United States treating Canadians so badly and so illegally?

The United States should find Arar in Syria and return him to his family.

Tom Trotter
Ottawa, Canada

Capitalism is priceless

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Understanding financial raping thinly veiled as capitalism: priceless?

Celeste Burns
junior sociology



Steve Baggs Emerald

Second Amendment should 'keep up with the times'

Guest commentary

MINNEAPOLIS (U-WIRE) — The sniper attacks this month near the nation's capital might or might not be the acts of terrorists, but they are certainly terrifying. No matter what the motives behind the attacks might be, the shooter has exercised the power to determine who lives and who dies, and this power has left the residents of the region and the nation feeling helpless, defenseless and panicked.

Because the assassin is using a firearm, these shootings cannot help but inflame discussion and debate over the laws and policies that govern the use of these deadly weapons. Just as Sept. 11, 2001, naturally led to a discussion of the laws and policies that govern both access to the airways and access to this country, the re-emergence of this debate is only natural. How could we not address how the sniper has the gun and how to prevent similar events in the future?

The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees citizens of this country the right to keep and bear arms. However, there is debate in the courts and in commen-

taries as to whether this amendment actually was meant to be applied to individuals or to the states to form militias.

In either case, the framers had two main concerns when passing the Second Amendment: First, the nation must be able to defend itself against other nations, and second, the citizens of the nation must have a defense against a tyrannical government that has a standing army of professional soldiers.

We have two choices: honor the words of the Constitution and the intent of the framers, in spite of the fact that the situation our nation faces today bears almost no resemblance to the circumstances that led to the passing of the Second Amendment; or, we can take a pragmatic approach to both the words and intent of the framers and construct gun legislation that balances the new role guns hold with the ability to provide increased security.

How can we honor the words and the intent of the Constitution? Simple: no limits on who can own weapons and no limit on what weapons they can own. The right to bear arms is not offered with exceptions, so why would it mean that we can own some arms and not others? Yet there are laws that prevent the average citizen from owning ful-

ly automatic machine guns and rocket launchers. And what about biological and chemical weapons?

Shouldn't the Second Amendment expand to keep up with the times? The framers didn't envision armor-piercing bullets, but it's been argued that the Second Amendment should protect our right to own them.

Here is where this argument dissolves into absurdity. If we want to honor the words and the intent of the Constitution, scenarios such as the ones above are the only way to be consistent. Remember, the Second Amendment was passed in order to allow ordinary citizens to defend the country in case of invasion.

This made sense at the time because the citizens didn't want a standing army of professional soldiers, and the weaponry of citizens and soldiers was exactly the same. Incidents such as Waco and Ruby Ridge should prove that there is little to be gained today by ordinary citizens taking up arms against the government because the technology of weaponry and the size of the U.S. Army have made this impossible.

The Second Amendment as envisioned by the framers is no longer relevant or practi-

cal. So this leaves us with just one option — a pragmatic approach to gun ownership and gun laws. Does this mean the end of the family hunting trip or the loss of the ability to defend your home against burglars? No. But it might mean registration of guns and identification procedures that allow police to trace bullets.

We have surrendered some of our personal liberties in order to allow our government to defend us from terror. President George W. Bush's USA Patriot Act is a prime example of a request by the government that we sacrifice some of the freedoms we enjoy to ensure we can recover some of the security lost by Americans to terrorists. Incidents such as the recent Washington-area sniper shootings also require that we make some sacrifices to ensure our security.

If the only hesitation is some misguided loyalty to the Second Amendment, then we need to re-evaluate what the framers were trying to protect and what we as Americans need to protect today.

Matt Telleen writes for the Minnesota Daily (U. Minnesota).