

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Michael J. Kleckner
 Managing Editor:
 Jessica Richelderfer
 Editorial Page Assistant:
 Salena De La Cruz

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Bias Response: No person has to endure biased language, acts

Guest commentary

We applaud the courage it takes for people to address bias incidents like Julie Lauderbaugh did in her column ("Attacking assault," ODE, May 1). We agree that hiding hate or bias-related incidents will not provide a safe and welcoming campus for anyone.

We also know that we can't and won't pretend our community members are not subjected to biased language and acts. Our first thoughts: No student, no person should have to endure violence and harassment. Our second: We are here to help.

Community is about being there for each other, when times are tough; the Bias Response Team is here.

The fundamental role of the University of Oregon Bias Response Team is to provide targets of bias a safe space to have their voices heard and to promote civility and respect. We want to effect change around these important issues in a quick and effective manner and to ensure a comprehensive response to bias incidents.

The BRT can help individuals connect to resources in each of these areas for appropriate resolution. The BRT also functions to ensure the evaluation of policies and procedures at the University. The Bias Response Team does not handle student conduct code violations, affirmative action issues, or issues of state or federal law.

However, we can provide support in reporting incidents to DPS or EPD. We can support a student if the event is a conduct code violation. A bias response process can provide trained advocates to assist with a vital response to critical issues.

We wish bias incidents like these did not exist, but in order to address them, people need to report them. If we don't know about specific incidents, we can't respond to them. We take bias incidents seriously and use a variety of tools and techniques to work with students, faculty and staff.

Only together can faculty, staff and students address these issues and affect campus climate. It is not a problem for a faculty member or a student or the administration to solve on their own. Only together can we ensure the University is a place we all feel welcomed and supported.

Find out more information at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~brt/>. The Bias Response Team can be reached at brt@darkwing.uoregon.edu.

Letters to the editor

Students must support bill to restore funding for education

Every year, more students are unable to afford to go to college. Next year will be a repeat of past years, and the number of low-income students unable to meet expenses and attend college to follow their dreams will increase, especially if the Oregon Opportunity Grant keeps getting cut out of the state budget!

When the Oregon Opportunity Grant was started, it covered full tuition plus some additional costs; now, because of higher education budget cuts in Salem, the grant covers less than 9 percent of annual educational costs. Because the Opportunity Grant gets money from the Education Stability Fund, when Measure 19 passed last September, the Opportunity Grant lost funding for about 3,300 grants for the next couple of years.

In order to restore access to higher education for everyone, students need to support House Bill 5052 as it is being considered. This bill would put \$5.5 million more into the Opportunity Grant and ease some of the cuts the grant experienced when Measure 19

passed last September. Everyone should have equal access to higher education.

On May 5, a group of students is traveling to Salem for Student Lobby Day. They will be speaking on behalf of or against several bills, or just showing student support. It's important that anyone who wants to and is able to come and shows his or her support for the Oregon University System budget. If you are interested, contact the ASUO Legislative team. Please come and show your support!

Kaitlin Kerwin
 ASUO legislative intern

Frohn Mayer deserves thanks for shared governance plan

Your University president deserves your thanks. Recently, the OUS Board approved a shared governance plan that will ensure greater opportunities for students to participate in campus decision-making processes on all of our campuses. Everything from setting tuition levels to approving new academic programs, your University president thinks you ought to be involved.

Through the hard work of the OSA staff and their board, the university presidents and the OUS board, this policy came to life.

We are all quite proud of it, and thanks should be shared all around the table — but don't forget the presidents.

It is these individuals who saw the value in the student perspective and made it their objective to formally include the student voice in campus governance. Kudos!

Tim Young
 student member
 OUS Board

Bush was right in freeing Iraqis

I'd like to say that every anti-war protest out there needs to apologize to the people of Iraq. President George W. Bush got it right, whether or not they want to admit it. I can understand being a peace-loving person, but so many of the liberals that jumped on the anti-war bandwagon just wanted to be retro ('60s hippies) and part of the liberal academia scene. Let the Iraqi people have freedom. I hope democracy and freedom spread to the rest of the world, too. George got it right, George got it right...

Richard A. Berger
 soldier
 South Korea

Gunning for safety

James Sheets will not be enjoying Cinco de Mayo this year. He didn't last past April 24, the day the 14-year-old boy stood up in the cafeteria of his southeastern Pennsylvania junior high school and opened fire, shooting his principal dead before turning a gun on himself.

Sadly, Sheets' case is hardly unique. Gun violence is an enormous problem in the United States. In 2001, according to federal statistics, guns were used to commit 8,719 murders, constituting 63 percent of the murders that year. That doesn't count the numerous gun-related accidents and suicides.



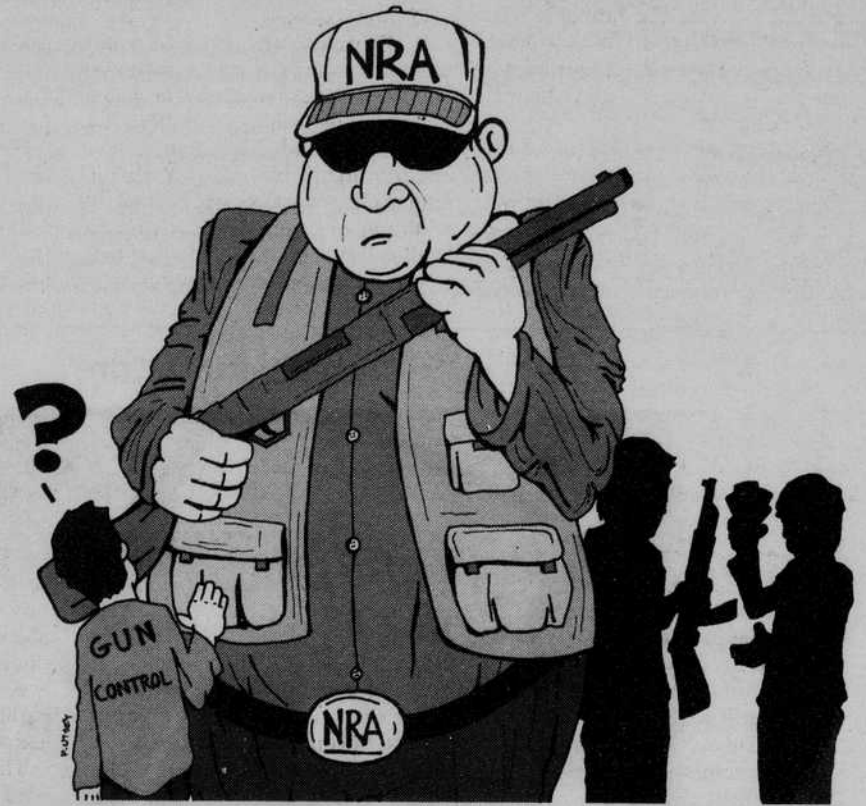
Chuck Slothower
 Clocktower hush

The powers that be have pussyfooted around gun issues for decades. The National Rifle Association bears partial responsibility for this. The NRA, once little more than a sportsmen's club, has evolved to become the most powerful lobbying organization in the United States.

The NRA contributes heavily to political candidates and has been known to inject cash into the campaign coffers of candidates running against gun control-friendly politicians. As a result, many politicians are scared of the NRA. Gun enthusiasts bring a level of passion, organization and money to the table that warps the political debate, preventing even the discussion of reasonable gun restrictions.

The NRA's near-absolutist approach is maddening because much more can be done to reduce gun violence while impinging minimally on gun owners' rights. Gun theft, for instance, is a major problem that hasn't been adequately addressed. A surprising 70 percent of guns used in crimes are stolen, according to a study cited in the *Journal of Urban Economics*.

While you can't force gun owners to store their weapons responsibly, a tax credit to encourage gun owners to buy gun safes could reduce gun theft. A bill currently languishing in the House of Representatives would do just that. The bill, HR 325, would provide for a tax credit of up to \$1,500 for gun owners to buy gun storage devices. The House should pass HR 325 without further ado.



Peter Utsey Emerald

Besides theft, another fruitful avenue for criminals seeking to obtain guns is the loosely regulated secondary market. As such, all gun sales should go through a federally licensed dealer. A compelling proposal by Florida State University professor Gary Kleck would have federally licensed dealers act as a third party to broker gun transactions.

When a buyer and seller wanted to transfer possession of a firearm, both would approach a dealer. The dealer would be required to run background checks as a condition of his or her firearms license. The checks would make sure the gun wasn't stolen and that the prospective buyer has no felony record. The transaction would then go through, with the dealer receiving a commission on the sale for his or her trouble.

Everybody wins: the buyer and seller get their business accomplished with minimum hassle, the dealer gets some income and a record remains for police to track down the gun owner if the weapon

ever turns up in connection with a crime. Most importantly, guns would be kept out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them.

Unfortunately, even modest, potentially lifesaving proposals such as these will never emerge from the current political environment. The House of Representatives is firmly in Republican control and President George W. Bush hasn't exactly proved eager to push for further gun control legislation.

While no amount of gun control legislation would completely eliminate gun violence, that doesn't mean policymakers should throw in the towel. However hopelessly naive this might be, Republicans would show a great deal of courage if they risked alienating the gun rights constituency to pass gun control legislation that might actually work.

Contact the columnist at chuckslothower@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Online poll

Each week, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

Last week: Do you think a company's press releases are free speech or commercial speech?

Results: 55 total votes

Free speech — 21.8 percent, or 12 votes
 Commercial speech — 72.7 percent, or 40 votes

What is this about? — 3.6 percent, or 2 votes

Leave me alone! — 1.8 percent, or 1 votes

This week: Do you agree with the Bush administration's Healthy Forest Initiative?

Choices: Yes — Increased logging will help prevent fires; Yes — The forests are there to be logged; No — There are other, more effective alternatives; No — Leave the forests alone; What Healthy Forest Initiative?; Leave me alone!