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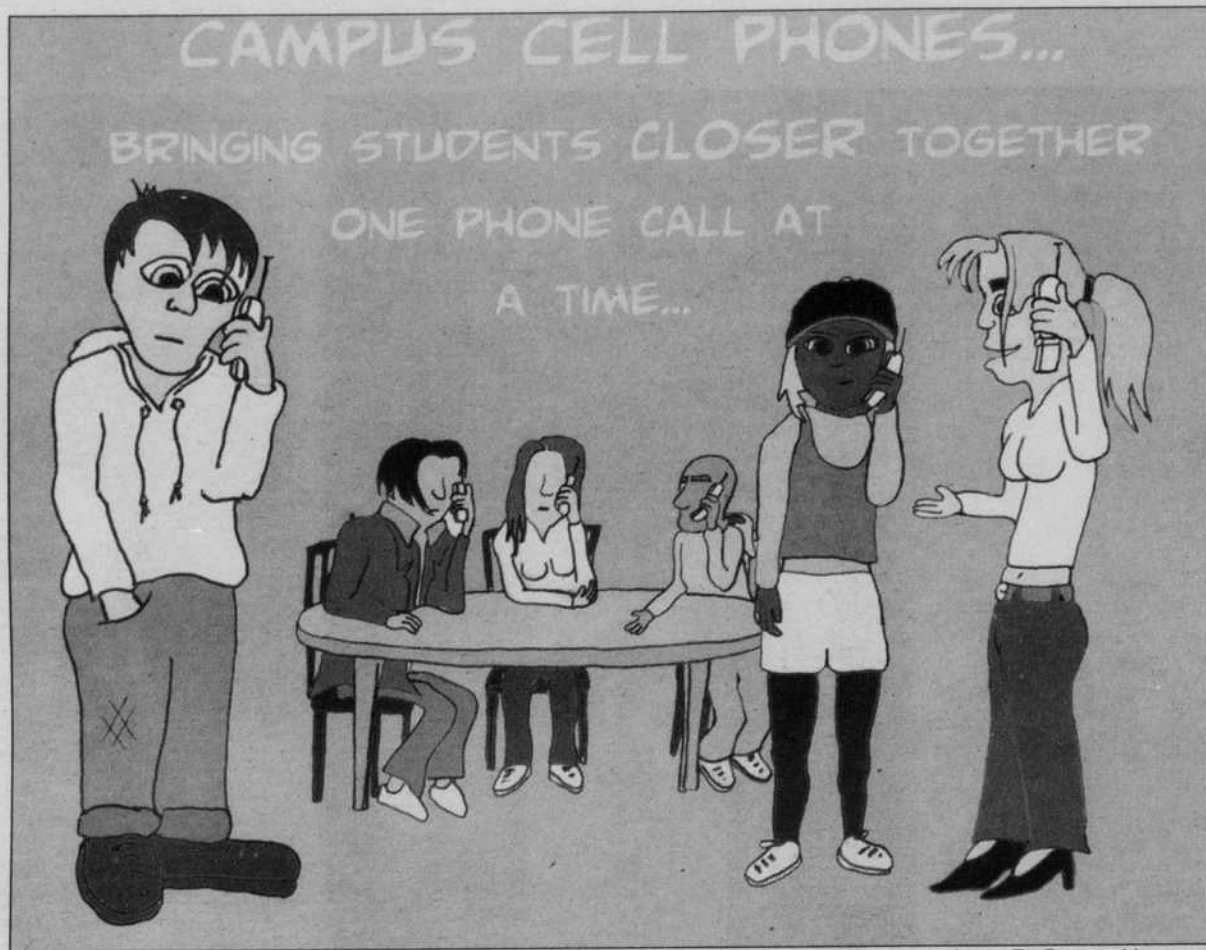
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AARON DUCHATEAU | ILLUSTRATOR

## In my opinion

# Immigration reform doesn't cut it

On Monday, President Bush unveiled his newest plan to recapture his conservative base. After five years of calls for tighter border security from the right, the president has finally proposed legislation to make the country safer.

Or so I thought. After reading the text from his speech at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona, I came away disheartened. I was hoping President Bush had finally seen the kind of threat that open borders pose.

The president's proposal, though a step in the right direction, stops short of enacting any meaningful reform. It does call for tighter security by increasing border guards, building fences and setting up cameras.

However, Bush's proposal has one major flaw: It grants worker visas to illegal immigrants already in the country, which will be renewable for up to six years. How is this going to make our country safer? Rewarding criminals with legal status not only encourages illegal immigration, but also threatens national security.

Perhaps the worst part of President Bush's bill is what's missing. The bill does nothing about illegal aliens already in the country. While increasing security is a step, we must remove the incentives for crossing the border.

Many people don't realize what a drain illegal immigration is on our system. Last year in Oregon we spent an estimated \$400 million educating illegal aliens, according to the Department of Education. Eight states have even gone so far as to grant in-state tuition to illegal aliens as long as they've attended high school in the state. Eleven other states, including Oregon, have recently tried to pass similar legislation.

Every day, illegal aliens use welfare, Medicaid, hospitals and schools without paying a cent in taxes. Many will argue that offering free social services is a small price to pay to keep the nation running. This country thrives on the work of millions of immigrants and visiting workers — the agricultural sector wouldn't be able to function without seasonal laborers. But our financial



KIRSTEN BROCK  
ILLUSTRATING ABSURDITY

need does not justify turning a blind eye to the illegal aliens in the country.

President Bush's plan completely ignores another problem — the acceptance of the matricula consular, or consulate card. The card was originally intended to help the Mexican consulates identify Mexican citizens living abroad. Now, the matricula consular is used as a valid form of identification in the United States.

All a Mexican citizen needs to do is report to one of 65 Mexican consulates in the United States and present his or her birth certificate. The problem is the Mexican government has no nationwide registry of criminals, birth certificates, death certificates or even matricula consular cards.

There is no background check performed, no fingerprints taken and there is no database of matriculas consulares, which enables illegal aliens to simultaneously hold several cards — even under different names. This makes it difficult for the Oregon consulate to verify the applicant's identity and criminal history.

Most disturbing is the fact that many states, including Oregon, accept these cards as a valid form of ID. Oregon and nine other states even grant driver's licenses to illegal aliens who hold a matricula consular. The driver's license in turn gives an illegal immigrant the ability to buy a house, get health insurance and open bank accounts.

Of course, Mexico's lack of infrastructure is its own problem — but the United States has no business accepting an ID card that is so unreliable. Because of the matricula consular ID cards, terrorists could easily

enter the country and settle in America without having to be processed by the government, which would enable them to travel around the country virtually undetected.

It may seem ridiculous to talk about Mexican terrorists — but who would have expected terrorists to enter the country from Canada before Sept. 11? If a man from the Middle East did cross the Mexican-American border, he could obtain a matricula consular ID card with ease. Since Mexico has no real register of births or deaths, all he would have to say would be that his parents emigrated from Saudi Arabia and that he was born in Mexico.

Who would be able to argue? In fact, this makes more sense than a terrorist entering through the Canadian-American border — it was already done in preparation for the 9/11 attacks, so why not try to enter through a border that isn't being watched for Middle Eastern terrorists?

Of course, many illegal aliens arrived here legally and have overstayed their visas. This is how Mohammed Atta and many of the other Sept. 11 hijackers arrived in this country. The INS, however, does not generally pursue visa violations. Instead, they prefer to focus on deporting criminals, not "law-abiding" aliens.

In fact, Tony Lew, the Los Angeles INS spokesman, said in 2001 that "our priorities are to go after illegal immigrants committing crimes. If they are law-abiding citizens, we don't have the resources to go looking for them."

The problem with this stance is that illegal aliens are not citizens, nor are they law-abiding. By being here, they have already broken the law and need to be deported. The president should realize that illegal immigration does pose a serious threat and the time for being compassionate is over. Either they wait in line and submit themselves to thorough background checks like legal immigrants or they need to find work elsewhere.

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## Editorial

# Vacation gives all an opportunity to serve

From Dec. 9 until Jan. 9, University students are free from classes and homework. While playing video games and bar-hopping may be on the top of some stressed-out students' lists of ways to spend winter break, we hope some Eugeneans will use the long vacation to help people in need through volunteer work.

Although the damage wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is no longer at the forefront of the media, the work to repair New Orleans and surrounding cities has only just begun. The American Red Cross is spearheading many efforts to help. People can fill out an application to volunteer for the Red Cross at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

The Oregon Pacific Chapter of the American Red Cross provides opportunities for volunteers to help in Eugene. It has its office at 862 Bethel Drive. Call 541-344-5244 to find out about volunteer opportunities such as Meals on Wheels and the Child Care Food Program, or visit [www.oregonpacific.redcross.org](http://www.oregonpacific.redcross.org). Wednesday, the Red Cross provided food, clothing and shelter to students whose homes were damaged by the fire near campus on 18th Avenue.

Smaller local organizations also create many opportunities to help the hungry and homeless in Eugene.

The Eugene Mission, a shelter on 1542 W. First Ave., provides food, clothing, shelter, gospel and work therapy to homeless people. The Mission is open 24 hours a day and serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Volunteers can help with serving meals or by participating in chapel services. To find out how to help, call Linn Antis at 541-344-3251 and ask about volunteer opportunities.

The Family Dinner Program, sponsored by FOOD for Lane County, provides another opportunity to help hungry Eugeneans. Every weekday at locations in Eugene and Springfield, the United Way of Lane County-funded agency serves an evening meal to individuals and families in need. Volunteers aid with food preparation in the afternoon and help serve meals in the evening. The program's main office is located at 770 Bailey Hill Road just west of West 11th Avenue. Those interested in volunteering can call Sheyla Norte at 541-343-2822 or visit United Way of Lane County's Web site at [www.volunteersolutions.org/uwlane](http://www.volunteersolutions.org/uwlane). The Web site provides a 28-page list of other volunteer opportunities.

Today is World AIDS day, which brings to light another opportunity to serve: the HIV Alliance. Visit [www.hivalliance.org](http://www.hivalliance.org) or call Nicole Buffington at 541-342-5088 ext. 10. Volunteers for the Alliance can "care for pets during a client's hospitalization, help with errands, plumbing or just be there to listen," according to the UWLC Web site.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Since you get more joy out of giving joy to others, you should put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give." So take some time out of your not-so-busy schedule over winter break and help some people in need.

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## CORRECTION

Wednesday's editorial (ODE "Now is the time to start learning from history") should have said former Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2004 called the situation in Darfur genocide.