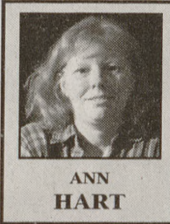


Taxation with reflection

High gas prices present consumers opportunity to rethink values, realize the finite nature of fuel

It is easy to tell that it is election time — the words “tax cut” ring through the air like church bells on Easter. Naturally, this is sweet music to everyone’s ears — everybody likes a tax cut. However, the most recent proposal is a foolhardy tax cut of the federal gasoline tax. This should be filed under the title of “The Worst Ideas Anyone Ever Had.”



ANN HART

When the price of gasoline began to climb in the United States, consumers, as always, began to whine. The noise woke someone in Washington from their coma long enough to propose — surprise! — the government should fix it. Since this was one of the rare times when the government did not hold all the cards, options or “fixing it” were limited to either lowering or eliminating the gas tax.

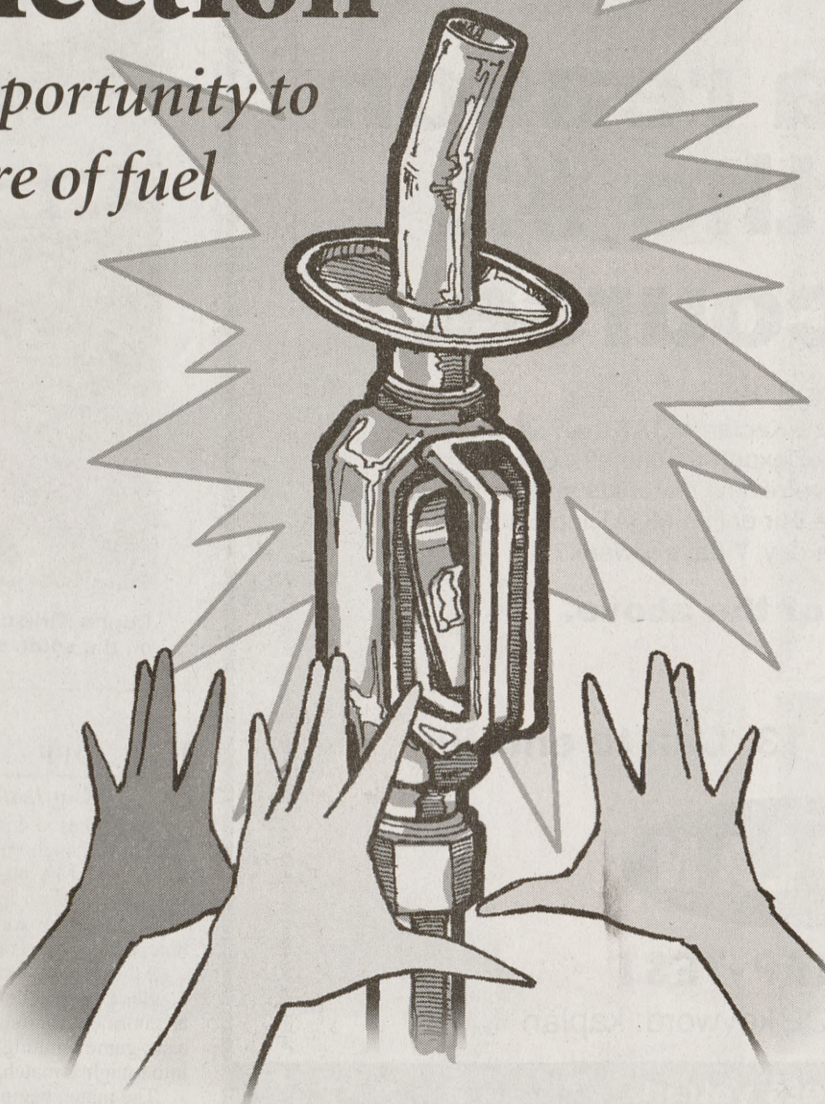
Proponents of lowering the tax said it will benefit the economy to relieve the consumer. However, it is difficult to believe that such a little bit of tax relief would fuel much of anything. And the long-term costs could be devastating indeed. The problem is not that the government will find a halt if it stops getting the 18 cents on every gallon sold. The problem is that no one is looking at the real problem. As long as gasoline is expensive, consumers will use it freely. Unfortunately, petroleum is a resource that has a limit. One day, there will be no more. Period.

raise the tax. And not a little bit. It would not be extravagant to tax gasoline enough to double its present price. If a gallon of gas were to cost three dollars (as it does in some countries), people would have to think twice before making extra trips, buying gas-guzzling monstrosities or unnecessarily commuting long distances.

The real benefit, however, of drastically increasing the gas tax is the revenue that would be generated. This revenue could be earmarked for research and development of renewable

As long as the country consumes vast amounts of petroleum, it will be at the mercy of oil-producing nations.

fuel resources and the kinds of transportation that use them. While some of this work is being done presently, the current solutions are too costly for the public, particularly personal transportation that is not gasoline dependent. The point is not that someone should build a car that does not use gas — it is that this car needs to be practical. That means affordable for ordinary people. It needs to go more than 100 miles before needing to be recharged and be something that consumers would actually want



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

Ann Hart is a senior English major.

Is creationism in text books OK? Unbiased education debated in Oklahoma

The Oklahoma House of Representatives has made a move to change the way science books read. An amendment to a proposed bill will ensure that books approved by the State Textbook Committee must acknowledge that “human life was created by one God of the universe.”



BRIENNE PORTER

The bill originally required that the textbook committee contain two elementary and two secondary level teachers. However, the bill snuffed its way into changing the way science is taught in Oklahoma public schools. Under the guise of doing what is best, some members of the House of Representatives are trying to take the fundamental basis of modern day science and manipulate it to their own personal beliefs.

Some members of the Oklahoma House are attempting to take away the right of school children to get an unbiased education. They are allowing the committee to not only add creationism into school but state it as fact. By putting creationism alone into textbooks without also the theory of evolution, the children do not have the opportunity to make a decision on their own. When the committee is allowed to stomp on rights and state that creationism is fact, children will be taught a biased theory and will be hindered in their education. Many classes, tests and accepted thoughts in the science community are based on evolution.

Many critics argue that science education is already biased, by not teaching creationism. This may seem true, but the fact is that Darwin’s evolution is the accepted theory in the science community, and many Americans agree that teaching this theory is necessary. By allowing textbooks to say creationism is correction, the House is looking to hurt children’s science education in the future.

Furthermore, the bill also allows the committee to put a “one page summary,

understand it or not, they have given an undo amount of power to the committee members. If this bill is approved, anything that is slightly controversial that was previously taught can be denied at the beginning of the book. It is a fact that most first impressions are the lasting ones. The opposing opinions will confuse children who tend to believe whatever textbooks say.

The ability to put disclaimers and opinions into textbooks is the first step toward a totalitarian government where school children learn only what the government believes is right. If something in the textbooks shows the government in an unfavorable light, the committee might put in a disclaimer that certain parts of the book critical of the government are not right. Ideas that some people are now starting to promote as fiction, such as the Holocaust, could be singled out as wrong if the committee is inclined to do so.

This kind of power should not be put into the hands of a few. The unbiased education in country will slowly be whittled away if bills like this one pass. Future generations of schoolchildren will be handicapped if the State Textbook Committee is allowed to say whatever they believe is right in the school’s textbooks. A biased government need not interfere with the education process. All theories need to have the chance to be taught and learned. Then the children will be able to make a decision based on knowledge of the subject and not what a few people think.

Brienne Porter is a freshman electrical engineering major.

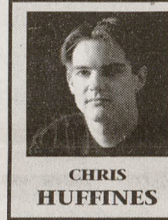


GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

opinion or disclaimer” into any book that is authorized for use in the schools. According to this bill and its amendments, the committee has the power not only to say creationism is fact, but anything else they feel is necessary. This opens a Pandora’s box of ideas that can be stated on the page as fact for schoolchildren. Whether the representatives

Rape defense perverts justice

It seems some men really do think with it. Will Wright, a 42-year-old from Midfield, Ala., has been charged with raping and sodomizing his live-in girlfriend’s 19-year-old daughter. Wright’s lawyer, Charles Salvagio, is claiming Wright is innocent due to mental defect, also known as the insanity plea. Wright’s mental defect supposedly stems from his use of Viagra, the popular pill that helps men afflicted with Erectile Disorder (ED). Salvagio is wrong — his client is not mentally defective, but his abuse of the insanity plea is.



CHRIS HUFFINES

Salvagio’s argument performs poorly because it completely ignores how Viagra works. Viagra can only enhance a previously existing, but failing, attempt at erection. Viagra cannot make an already healthy man get more out of an intimate encounter with his mate of choice. Those with ED typically have a deficiency of a chemical called cGMP that increases blood flow to Mr. Happy. Viagra simply increases the effectiveness of the little cGMP they have. In other words, Viagra does not make anyone more or less likely to engage in mad, passionate sex — it just helps those for whom the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Salvagio claims that Wright, who pled guilty to sexual assault in 1984, should have been denied a prescription for Viagra. But his argument just does not measure up. First, there is no possible way that Viagra caused Wright to rape anyone. Second, even if Viagra did alter Wright’s mental state, he is guilty of not disclosing his “urges” to the doctor. Finally, Wright’s arguments do not even meet an insanity plea’s burden of proof.

Wright did not suddenly become a crazed sex-fiend because of Viagra. Viagra’s side-effects do not include the desire to engage in whipped-cream, leather monkey sex. Both the negative and positive effects of Viagra have been exhaustively cataloged. They include some increased bodily stiffness, nausea, diarrhea and color distortion in the blue-green part of the spectrum. Nowhere is “patient becomes a sexual predator” listed, nor has it been recognized in any of the Food and Drug Administration tests. This is simply because it isn’t a side effect.

Even if Viagra did somehow affect Wright’s brain, causing a known sex-offender to suddenly lust after the teenager he lived with, he is still liable. If Wright knew that the only thing keeping him from making advances on his girlfriend’s daughter was his inability to get his funk on, perhaps a little forethought should have stopped him from getting the prescription. Heaven forbid a lack of morality or common sense so easy to blame, what with Viagra and the company that made it to blame. Not to stereotype rapists as amoral, but Salvagio’s argument seems to ignore the fact that Wright may have gotten the Viagra expressly for the purpose of committing another sexual assault. He certainly should not have expected the prescribing doctor to root through court records for a 15-year-old conviction.

Even worse, Viagra only has an active lifespan of one to four hours per dose. Wright could only have had assisted sex within four hours of taking the pill. If he had taken the pill specifically to have sex with his girlfriend’s daughter against her will, it is clearly rape.

If having sex with his girlfriend was not enough and he raped her daughter on the tail end of that four-hour span, Wright is still a danger to society. Either way, he took the pill when he should not have, or he was so sexually insatiable that having sex with his girlfriend did not satisfy his lust for her daughter. Whatever the reason, it was not the Viagra, kiddos.

Finally, Wright’s claims do not meet the burden of proof for an insanity defense. Under the law, if the defendant’s actions were reasonable in the context of his “delusion,” then he is not guilty by reason of mental defect. Under what delusion could Wright have been operating which would have made forcing himself on a girl half his age acceptable?

The argument is not so much absurd as pathetic. Unsatisfied with conventional law (or morality), Wright and his lawyer are stretching the insanity defense beyond the intentions of its originators. Rather than devoting so much time and energy to a defense whose stupidity boggles the mind, perhaps Wright should focus on finding a way to keep his libido for youngsters down.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.

Salvagio’s argument performs poorly because it completely ignores how Viagra works.

MAIL CALL

Minorities involvement with Parents’ Weekend lacking

I would like to express my disappointment and concern in regard to the minority turn-out at Parents’ Weekend. I am myself an African-American student at Texas A&M and my mother visited for Parents’ Weekend and consistently remarked how much she enjoyed herself.

We attended the Aggie Mom’s boutique, the Parents’ Weekend Barbeque and she even became a new member of the Aggie Mom’s Club in our community.

However, during these events I could count on my fingers how many minority parents and students attended. There seems to be a misconception of minority students that our parents would not enjoy the events provided or be interested in student-oriented activities here.

We should not deprive our parents of experiencing and expressing their pride to be Aggie parents based solely on our opinions. I do believe there could be more variety of programs for our parents, but I do not see minority associations arranging such an array of programs.

Overall, I do feel Parents’ Weekend catered to what is really important, which is a parent’s being proud of their Aggie son’s and daughter’s involvement in their lives.

Shawna Howell Class of ’01

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author’s name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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