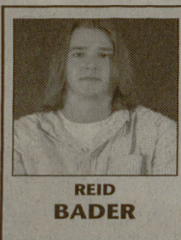


Possibly offensive, not illegal Proposal to outlaw flag burning infringes on right to free expression

Most Americans pity the way citizens are treated in countries with oppressive regimes. Dictators limit the rights of their countrymen, reaching endlessly for absolute political order. While nearly as harsh, or with the same goal of absolute political order that dictators might use, the U.S. House of Representatives is attempting to implement a technique that limits the political power of U.S. citizens by passing the Flag Protection Amendment.



REID BADER

The amendment, which would be the 18th amendment to the Constitution since the Bill of Rights, is not being pushed by its supporters as a tool for political subversion. Instead, they consider the flag to be something far above the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech and expression.

"Vandalizing a no parking sign is a misdemeanor, but burning a flag is a hate crime, because burning the flag is an expression of contempt for the moral unity of the American people," said Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill.

One of the main supporters of the amendment is the Citizens Flag Alliance (CFA). Formed 11 years ago to implement the new amendment, it is comprised of numerous ethnic, civic and veterans associations.

CFA President Daniel S. Wheeler recently wrote on their Website, "We must restore our flag to its rightful place under the law so that our children and our grandchildren will never be confused about its meaning, its value or the price paid to preserve it."

The CFA fails to realize that by placing a symbol of freedom above the right of expres-

sion, they are confusing their children and grandchildren even more.

One of the main opponents of the Flag Protection Amendment is the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

Gregory T. Nojeim, associate director of the ACLU's Washington National Office said, "It is not the arcane symbol of a dead and bankrupt nation for one simple reason: The Constitution for which it flies demands that its value rest in the principals of free expression and tolerance for dissent rather than protection of its graphic design."

This is the view of many opponents to the amendment. It is also the reason that for over a decade, every time it was introduced into the Senate, the amendment was rejected.

In a recent letter to House Republicans, Senator Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. wrote, "It would be unfortunate if we began tampering with the important and fundamental protection of the First Amendment because of a handful of malcontents."

McConnell is right on the money. America was built on embracing the idea of the masses, not limiting the ideas of the few. Colin Powell, a retired four-star general and secretary of state said, "I would not amend that great shield of democracy to hammer a few miscreants. The flag will be flying long after they have slunk away."

This nation was founded on ideals of liberty, democracy and culture, not on a flag. Old Glory is a symbol of these. If someone feels that his or her rights are being infringed on, there is no excuse for further infringing his or her rights by censoring his or her freedom of expression.

Reid Bader is a junior political science major.



ANGELIQUE FORD/THE BATTALION

Rather's silence on Levy case shows bias

Nearly everyone in America has heard the names Chandra Levy and Gary Condit at least once during the last month. It is nearly everyone because those people who rely solely on "The CBS Evening News" would have no idea of the vanished intern and the suspected Democratic congressman. Anchor Dan Rather and Executive Producer Jim Murphy have decided that news about a 24-year-old woman who mysteriously vanished while having an affair with a congressman is not worth airtime. On the other hand, according to the Media Research Council, CBS "found time for stories on how anthrax is killing deer in Texas ... and even 19 seconds to recount how the guy who threw a dog into an oncoming car received a three-year jail sentence."



MARK PASSWATERS

Some people are claiming that Rather, who has a history of bias toward the Democratic Party, is ignoring the story because of Condit's political affiliation. If this is the case, Dan Rather must be replaced as the anchor of "The CBS Evening News."

He not only is besmirching the reputation the program gained during the eras of Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite but is doing a disservice to the American public. Almost everyone has a political leaning, but Rather is obligated to hide his for 30 minutes every night. If he cannot, he must be removed.

During his daily radio commentary on Monday, Rather accused members of the press and conservatives in Congress of trying to "titillate themselves, and they hope you, with the latest rumors and speculation about what they believe is a 'sexual scandal.'"

Other members of the press are not buying Rather's explanation. Howard Kurtz of *The Washington Post* and the writer of the well-regarded "Media Notes" column, slammed Rather on Don Imus' radio show Tuesday morning.

"D.C. cops searching a congressman's apartment, a 24-year-old missing woman, another woman who said she had an affair with the congressman and he urged her to cover it up. I mean, that's not worth a sentence or two from Dan Rather's lips?"

It's a head-in-the-sand approach," Kurtz said. When Imus asked Kurtz what he would ask Rather, he replied that he "[would ask him] when he plans to get in touch with the rest of the world."

That evening, Rather finally spoke of Levy, "calling her one of 200,000 missing people" while stressing "there is no crime here, so far."

On Friday morning, Rather told Imus he had been forced to report on the story: "They didn't want Imus to eat me alive ... but I still don't think there's a story there."

If Condit had been a Republican, Rather's past actions seem to suggest that he would have taken a different approach to the story. In recent months, Rather has referred to President George Bush's win in Florida as "so-called" or "what Katherine Harris (Florida's Secretary of State) thinks is a victory," re-

ferred to Senator Bob Toricelli's (D-NJ) violation of tax laws and his investigation by a Jimmy Carter appointed district attorney as "a Republican-motivated attack."

In 1992, "The CBS Evening News" ran several lead stories on Senator Robert Packwood (R-OR) and the sexual harassment allegations — later proven to be true — against him. This, to use Rather's words, was "a sexual scandal."

Rather has also referred to former President Clinton as "an honest person," something many Clinton supporters cannot agree with.

"I think you can be an honest person and lie about any number of things," this comment, made on Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor," infuriated host Bill O'Reilly to the point that he cut to a commercial and had Rather removed from the set.

On the other hand, Rather refused to allow CBS to run a story about the rape allegations made by Juanita Broaddrick against Clinton and had to be forced to report on the Monica Lewinsky episode, claiming it was a "so-called scandal."

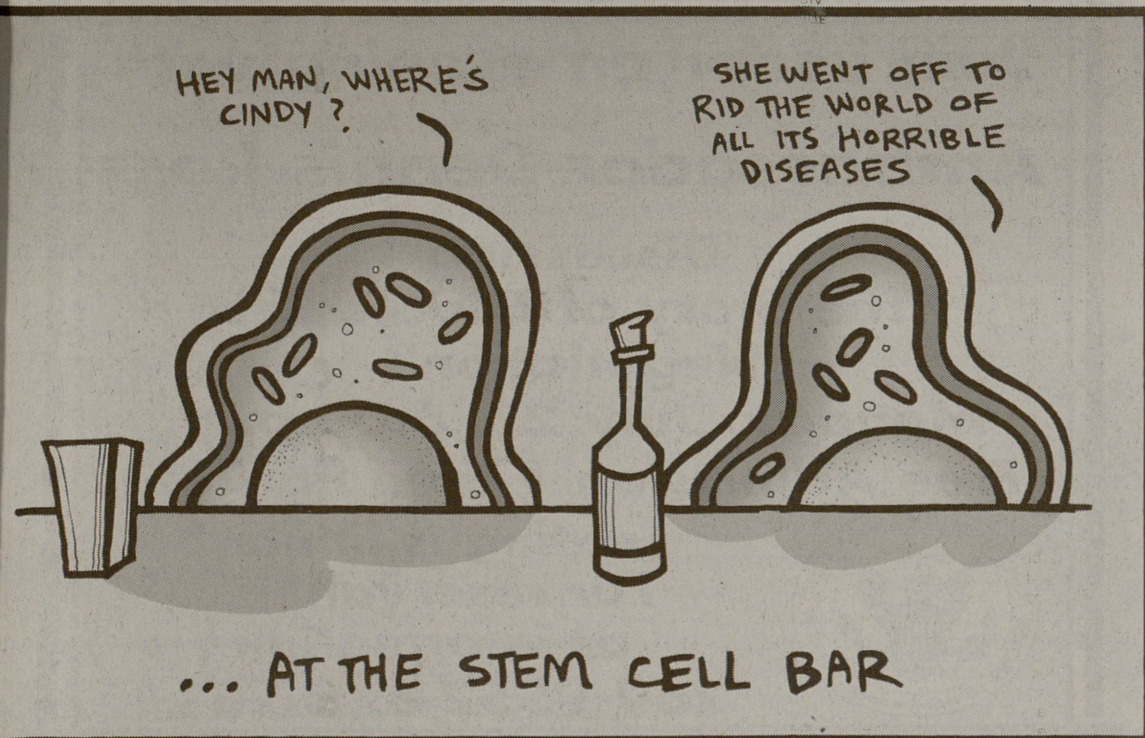
Bernard Goldberg, a former CBS reporter who worked with Rather for more than two decades, wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that "Dan can't help it. He doesn't know he's biased."

Whether Rather knows it, his refusal to report on a story which becomes more newsworthy by the day is an embarrassment to his profession. CBS, which has reported on the story for its other news programs, should force Rather to see the damage he is causing to his and their reputation. If Rather continues to veto such stories on partisan grounds, he should become CBS' prime candidate for early retirement.

Everyone in the media has some bias. Some people hide it better than others. There are times that Dan Rather sounds like he is a robot paid for by the Democratic Party. This is not good for his network, nor is it good for the people who rely on CBS for their news. Perhaps the time has come for Dan Rather to do his reporting elsewhere.

Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UNCARTOONIST ©

Mail Call

Homosexual marriage is contrary to religions

In response to Stuart Hudson's July 16 column.

Contrary to Stuart Hudson's claims, marriage is a fundamentally religious institution and cannot be stripped of its religious foundation. The State's recognition of and respect for marriage is based upon the First Amendment protections of religion from State interference.

In other words, the State cannot define marriage, and it certainly cannot redefine it. Nor should it want to encourage the homosexual lifestyle, which is an extremely dangerous one. CDC statistics and crime reports bear witness to this fact. The risk of AIDS and other STDs is astronomically higher, and the sexual deviancy involved encourages even more deviant activities such as bestiality and sex crimes against children.

Any one involved in a homosexual lifestyle would be well advised to get out of it, for their own sake. Hudson's comparison of interracial marriage to homosexuality is ridiculous. From a scriptural stand-

point, the arguments against homosexuality are abundantly clear and direct, whereas interracial issues are not even addressed. Finally, from a purely logical and scientific standpoint, "same-sex marriage" is an oxymoron. It makes no sense whatsoever.

In the name of being "open-minded," Hudson believes that the State should violate the First Amendment by forcing religions to accept — and even promote — a lifestyle that, in addition to being inherently dangerous, is as abhorrent to them as are adultery, incest, and murder.

Jon L. Gardner
Class of '89

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