

Bush shouldn't get military vote

Iraq war, refusal to attend soldiers' funerals should haunt him in 2004 election

On May 1, 2003, the sailors of the USS Abraham Lincoln were delayed getting to port after a 10-month voyage because President George W. Bush, who was scheduled to make a speech declaring the end of major combat operations in Iraq on the aircraft carrier, was sleeping. Unfortunately, this incident was only one in a disturbing pattern in Bush's disregard for the needs of America's military. Although most voting members of the military are expected to support the president in his reelection bid this fall, the president has not earned their vote.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

Twice, Bush has attempted to manufacture photo opportunities using the military as a backdrop. The USS Lincoln incident, when the president unnecessarily donned a flight suit and arrived via jet (even though the carrier was in helicopter range), was the first. Later that year, Bush was shown carrying a fake turkey while visiting troops in Baghdad during Thanksgiving.

Preposterously, some soldiers who walked as much as 15 minutes to the Bob Hope facility to see the president and get a Thanksgiving meal were denied entrance for security reasons, according to a letter to the editor in the military newspaper, The Stars and Stripes. Bush's visit to Iraq was supposed to be a morale builder for the troops, but how can turning soldiers away when they come to see you build morale?

Regrettably, Bush has made even worse decisions regarding the uniformed men and women in Iraq. In one case, it has literally been a life and death matter. When the war in Iraq was starting, only ground combat troops were issued potentially life-saving Kevlar vests. Only now is the Pentagon working to get these vests to all soldiers in Iraq, nearly a year after the war began. As commander in chief, it was Bush's responsibility to ensure that all of the troops in Iraq had these vests, but he failed miserably.

Last summer, The San Francisco Chronicle reported that the Bush administration approved a Pentagon plan to rollback an increase in "imminent danger pay" from \$225 to \$150. A wave of negative publicity ensued. This included a scathing editorial

by The Army Times on June 30, 2003, titled, "Nothing but Lip Service," which stated, "President Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress have missed no opportunity to heap richly-deserved praise on the military. But talk is cheap — and getting cheaper by the day, judging from the nickel-and-dime treatment the troops are getting lately." It was only after receiving negative media attention that Bush signed a bill that kept the combat pay

raises in place.

The Bush administration has also been malicious when it comes to veterans' benefits. In 2003, Bush submitted a proposal to Congress that slashed funding for a veteran's health care program by \$1.8 billion. Current Democratic presidential candidate and Vietnam veteran John Kerry criticized this move, according to The San Antonio Express News. But he wasn't the only one, as several veterans' groups also criticized the cut. As if his policy decision concerning the military wasn't bad enough, service members must suffer the indignity of knowing Bush has not — and will not — attend any funerals of those killed in Iraq. Some have argued the president can't show signs of weakness during his campaign on terror and attending funerals with large amounts of media coverage will only encourage more attacks by Iraqi insurgents.

But this reasoning is weak. It would be better if Bush attended funerals and delivered the message that the United States will get the job done in Iraq no matter what. Nonetheless, Bush is willing to send Americans to die in an unnecessary war but is not willing to attend any of their funerals. This is a slap in the face to those willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Despite all this, Bush will most likely be supported by the majority of military voters. The biggest reason why this is so is the stronghold Republicans have over U.S. service members. The Army Times reports that while only one-third of Americans identify with the GOP, a whopping 57 percent of service members surveyed by The Military Times consider themselves Republican. And even though the military is increasingly composed of women and minorities — groups traditionally loyal to the Democratic Party — even they lean conservative, according to Salon.com.

Still, military members should seriously consider the actions Bush has taken in his three years in office. Any honest appraisal will reveal Bush doesn't deserve their valuable votes.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major. Graphic by Tony Piedra



MAIL CALL

Kerry's record with military questionable

In response to Jon Steed's Feb. 3 column:

All this talk about Kerry being a supporter of the military is unfounded, especially when he aligns himself with Jane "The Traitor" Fonda. I commend Kerry for his service in the Vietnam War, but his service does not excuse his actions when he returned home. Yes, he led protests, but what you don't hear is when these soldiers that were returning home, Kerry and VVAW (a pro-communist group) were the ones calling them "baby-killers" and accusing their brothers-in-arms of war crimes against the "innocent" North Vietnamese.

He marched down streets with the North Vietnamese flag at the same time they were holding the American flag upside down. Kerry wrote a book called the "New Soldier" in which the cover has people making a mockery of Iwo Jima and raising the flag American flag upside down. He is despised by so many Vietnam vets that there is a group that is against him: Vietnam Veterans Against John Kerry. He did much more than this; there just isn't enough room to put it all. Kerry claims to be a staunch supporter of the military while at the same time voting against weapons that has saved military lives, i.e. the F-14, F-15 and Tomahawk missiles, to name a few.

I hope President Bush wins this upcoming election, but if a Democrat was to win there are better choices than Kerry, like Joe Lieberman. With a little research you can find out that Kerry met with Liu Chaoying and aided in the selling of U.S. military intelligence during the Clinton administration. Bush's AWOL urban legend has also been proven to be nothing out a myth. The Times reports that the General who accused him of being AWOL has backed away from his story and that The Globe also flubbed the story. After a seven-month gap Bush appeared for duty.

What most people don't hear is that the Texas National Guard allows guard members to miss duty as long as they make it up in the same quarter, and Bush does so. Take a poll of military personnel and you will get an overwhelming majority who are against him. Kerry is just as left as Howard Dean. Neither would make good presidents.

*Jason Mooney
Class of 2005*

Robinson subjects himself to criticism

In response to a Feb. 2 mail call:

I find it quite shocking that Kevin Reilly attacked Holly Coneway's thoroughly-articulated, truthful and accurate article with such falsities.

Yes, Christianity is about helping people and accepting them, but that doesn't mean condoning sinful behavior.

Someone in a leadership position willingly accepts the fact that they are to be judged more harshly and scrutinized more closely because they are in the public eye. If they are to accept that position of representing the Bible and Christ-like behavior, then they must uphold those morals in every aspect of their life.

For the reverend to preach on the evil of homosexuality yet have an ongoing relationship with another man is hypocrisy, a trait severely condemned by Jesus.

If you truly understood the Bible, then you would know that expecting Christians to support gay marriages is quite ridiculous. The fact that homosexuality is an abomination to God is not up for misinterpretation. It is clearly stated, and there is only one way to understand that. I suggest before you write again about something so powerful about what is right and wrong according to the Bible you do more research first, it's dangerous to mislead others as to who Christ is.

*Erin Parker
Class of 2003*

First Amendment under attack by city of Bryan

The sight of protesters each day in front of the Planned Parenthood clinic on East 29th Street in Bryan is hardly breaking news. Each individual has his or her own method: some hold signs, some pray and some offer alternatives to those entering the clinic.

Anyone looking closely at those holding the signs will notice that they are either holding them up in the air or resting them on their feet. Why? The city of Bryan now says that having signs on the ground violates city's sign ordinance.

Bryan's code and its enforcement methods have violated the protesters' First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and assembly by inhibiting their means of peaceful protest.

Bryan city officials agree. Or at least they used to. In a letter that is now public domain dated Feb. 8, 2001, Michael Cosentino, an attorney representing the city, said, "... if a protester wants to place a sign in the right of way for a few hours during a peaceful demonstration, remove the sign when he leaves for the day and the sign creates no hazards or obstructions while it is in the right-of-way, the First Amendment will not allow the city to apply its sign ordinance in a way that would prohibit him from doing so or require him to wait 14 to 21 days to obtain city council approval."

Obviously, something changed, and it was not the First Amendment. If forbidding protesters to place a sign in the right-of-way was unconstitutional three years ago, it stands to reason that it is unconstitutional today. It is ridiculous to think that the constitutionality of the issue can change in such a short period of time.

According to municode.com, the Bryan City Ordinance says, "It shall be unlawful to place a sign upon a public street, public sidewalk, public alley, public right-of-way, public curb or other public improvements in any public street or grounds ..." Furthermore, it states that anyone who is to install such a sign should be issued a permit and pay appropriate fees.

Numerous exceptions are made to this rule. Among these are political signs, signs not visible from the street and hand-held signs.

Cosentino's letter states that protesters' signs are another exemption. However, the city need not make this exception in its ordinance; the First Amendment already guarantees it. Cosentino said a handheld sign is equivalent to wearing a T-shirt that contains a message or slogan. Since signs touching the ground are prohibited, the protesters should simply hold them up.

David Bereit, executive director of the Coalition for Life, said he strongly disagrees. For more than the first three years that the Coalition protested in front of Planned Parenthood, there were no problems regarding the signs. In July 2002, after a story was published by The Eagle, several police officers appeared at the Coalition's next large gathering and ordered the signs be removed, citing violations of the city's sign ordinance. The Coalition complied.

Soon after that incident, a volunteer from the Coalition for Life drove down the streets of Bryan and counted dozens of sign violations that the police officers seemingly

failed to notice while driving to order the removal of pro-life signs.

David Bereit said Cosentino originally told him that the ordinance enforcement was complaint-driven. However, when later questioned by The Battalion about the enforcement policy, he said that they are partly complaint-driven and partly issued by officers who notice violations.

The Coalition for Life sent an e-mail on Nov. 21, 2002, to its supporters announcing that a lawsuit had been filed against the City of Bryan by the Coalition and six other individuals. In the e-mail, the Coalition states, "Since July of this year, the city of Bryan has ... begun targeting pro-life signs and free speech for removal from the public right-of-way in front of the controversial facility."

A public example of this occurred last summer when a protester, acting as an individual, decided to place a flag flying at half-mast on the public right-of-way. After Planned Parenthood complained, the Bryan police ordered that the flag be removed saying it constituted a sign.

The controversy that followed led to businesses having to remove flags, and Boy Scouts not being allowed to place flags out as part of their fundraiser.

After many citizens complained, the policy was changed so that flags can be placed on the public right-of-way as long as the adjacent property owner gives permission. Thus, the businesses and the Boy Scouts were satisfied, yet the pro-life protesters still could not put up a flag since Planned Parenthood refused to give them permission.

This raises the question: What is the purpose of a public right-of-way if the adjacent property owner can regulate it to some degree? Since today

the city says that the property owner can determine if a flag can be placed there or not, why not let them decide who can stand on the right-of-way or not? So much for freedom of speech. Mark down a win for Planned Parenthood. Sadly, this scenario is blatantly unconstitutional. It is also a reality.

Instead of leaving everything as it was and allowing flags to be in the public right-of-way as they always had been, the city changed its policy primarily due to Planned Parenthood's complaint. As a result, the Coalition for Life suffered unjust discrimination.

On Dec. 15, the Coalition for Life and the city of Bryan presented their case before a federal judge in Houston. Yesterday, on Feb. 3, the judge declared that since the city changed its ordinance, it is now constitutional. However, he failed to address the questions of whether or not rights were violated before the ordinance was changed and if the ordinance had been applied unequally against the Coalition for Life. It is obvious, though, that the ordinance was originally unconstitutional, otherwise it would not have been changed.

Hopefully upon appeal the two unanswered questions will be addressed and the constitution upheld.

"Bryan's code and its enforcement methods have violated the protesters' First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and assembly by inhibiting their means of peaceful protest."



CODY SAIN

Cody Sain is a junior philosophy major.

