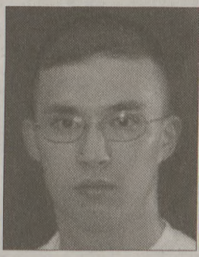


Silencing the NRA



ERIC BROWN

left to research the candidates on their own, something that many of them simply don't have the inclination or time to do.

The fight against this law, led in the Senate by Mitch McConnell R-Ky., showed Americans the negative effects that the implementation would have on the voting population. Shortly after its Senate passage, McConnell met with a free speech coalition, of which the NRA is a member. Included in this coalition are groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, the Christian Coalition, the Business-Industry Political Action Committee, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Right to Life Committee, the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association.

This action of conservative and liberal interest groups coming together to show their dislike for the bill should have demonstrated to Congress the bill's unpopularity with all of these interest groups — all affected negatively by the legislation.

"The dirty word used to describe unwanted influence is 'special interest' groups. That's an inaccurate characterization," Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President.

"The NRA's four million members should be proud to be a special interest group," LaPierre said. "Our special interest? Saving the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution. Now we are called upon to save the First Amendment. That's our special interest as well."

Although this bill was passed in March of 2002, it has been a hot topic since then, including several cases that went all the way to the Supreme Court. But, unfortunately, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of this outrageous law.

Fortunately many are fighting to have it repealed. Earlier in the year, Rep. Roscoe Bartlett R-Md., introduced the First Amendment Restoration Act, which is a stepping stone for having this law repealed. Behind him, he has the full support of special inter-

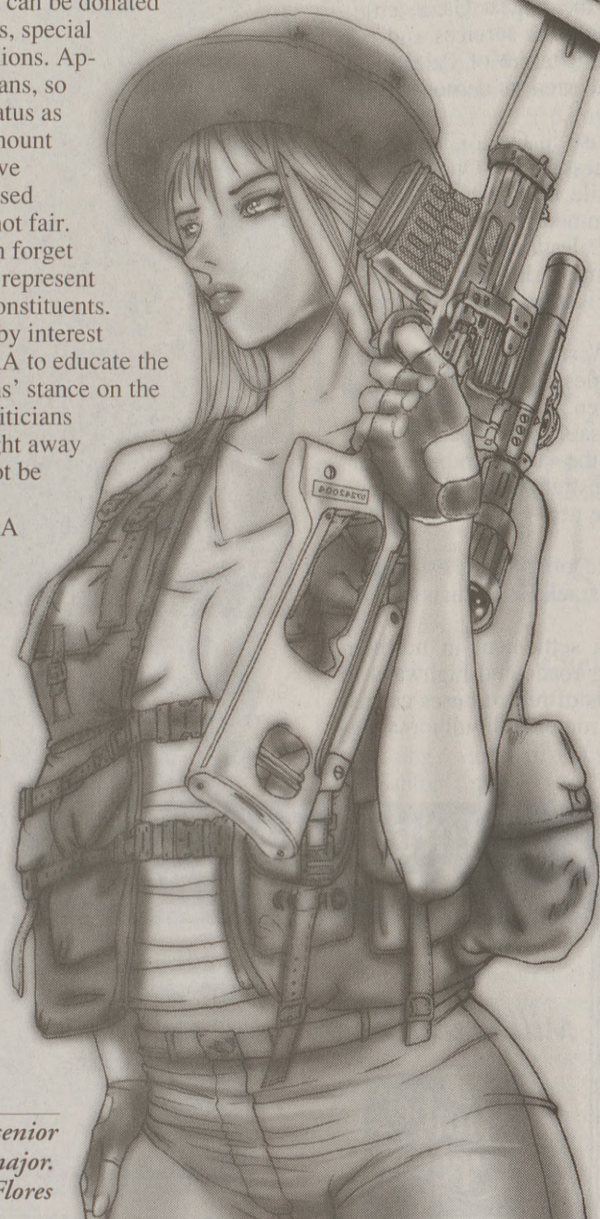
est groups such as the NRA, ACLU and the Christian Coalition.

It is a sad fact that the government has come to the point where it must regulate the amount of money that can be donated or spent by individuals, special interest groups and unions. Apparently some politicians, so worried about their status as a politician and the amount of money that they have in their war chest, missed the memo that life is not fair. These politicians often forget why they are there: to represent the interests of their constituents.

It is a service done by interest groups such as the NRA to educate the public about politicians' stance on the issues, but it is the politicians who are taking this right away from them. This cannot be tolerated.

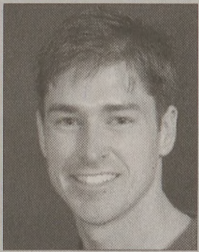
Members of the NRA should be proud of the many years that the NRA has fought for Second Amendment rights, and also join in the fight for First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and freedom of press, of which the Campaign Finance Reform Act clearly violates.

Eric Brown is a senior German major. Graphic by Ivan Flores



Philippine negotiation tactics should be emulated by U.S.

Perhaps aggressive action is not the most effective way to combat terrorism, especially in today's "civilized" society. Thanks to the Philippines, a new strategy for combating these murders has been demonstrated, illuminating the truth that negotiations and appeasement are two very useful alternatives to intolerance.



NICHOLAS DAVIS

Recently, terrorists from the group Islamic Army-Khaled bin Al-Waleed Corps kidnapped Filipino truck driver, Angelo de la Cruz, and paraded his frightened face on Al-Jazeera while demanding the withdrawal of all the 51 Filipino troops in the region.

Given the examples set by Japan, South Korea and Bulgaria, all who opposed negotiating with terrorists to save one of their countrymen, many thought de la Cruz, a father of eight working in Iraq to gain money to restore his child's eyesight, was done for.

Miraculously, though, Filipino President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo caved to the demands and took the requisite steps to appease the terrorists.

This is wonderful for de la Cruz and his family. But it has brought about a firestorm of criticism from other countries in the coalition, most notably the United States and Australia.

According to Fox News and CNN, the United States and Australia claimed such capitulation only fuels the desire to kidnap more innocent civilians and endanger other coalition members in Iraq.

This is the pot calling the kettle black. First, let's not kid ourselves, coalition members have been in danger since they first set foot in Iraq. Secondly, it's insulting to listen to blatant lies from U.S. officials who claim to renounce negotiating with terrorists; they've been doing it all along.

Recall Fallujah, the now infamous Iraqi city, where several troops and workers were captured and brutally murdered by Iraqi civilians who later desecrated their bodies and dragged their limbs through the streets as crowds cheered.

This city deserved severe coalition retaliation but the United States caved, in a manner similar to that of the Philippines, fearing that their response would appear too brutal. In fact, some members of the Iraqi council resigned because they claimed that a United States response was unprovoked.

As a result, Fallujah, according to a Fox News

Report, has become revered in the Arab World. Egyptian Novelist Gamal el-Ghitani told Fox, "I used to laugh, despite the ghastly daily news, about how a bunch of poor, helpless Iraqis with primitive weapons are forcing the greatest super power to negotiate." Libyan University Professor, Ibrahim el-Firjani proclaimed, "Fallujah has shown America the real Arabs, not those lining up to surrender."

Turn now to Saudi Arabia, a so-called ally in the War on Terror, which granted amnesty to surrendering terrorists while simultaneously refusing to permit the FBI to question any of them; not even Khaled al-Harbi, the associate of Osama bin Laden who surrendered to benefit from the amnesty.

One can't help but reflect on President Bush's words that, "the United States will make no distinction between terrorists and those who harbor them."

A terrorist is a terrorist whether he has surrendered or not, and if a country grants him amnesty and refuses to allow coalition forces to interrogate him, that country is harboring him. It's that simple.

Surprisingly, though, no announcement has come from the White House iterating the relationship between the United States and the Saudis is being reevaluated, but in an act of hypocrisy the White House did issue such a statement about the relationship with the Philippines.

The U.S. officials must get this through their heads: If U.S. policy is to never negotiate or show any leniency towards terrorists and their supporters and sympathizers, then stand by it at all costs or shut up.

President Arroyo should be commended for saving a man's life that otherwise would have been lost in vain. Besides, the Philippines' presence in the region is only a symbolic one and honestly, what purpose does a symbol serve nowadays anyhow? In today's society a symbol is just as meaningless as overrated terms like honor, determination, and justice. One can only hope that future generations will rediscover these meanings, but until then Americans should enjoy living in Oz.

"If a country grants (a terrorist) amnesty and refuses to allow coalition forces to interrogate him, that country is harboring him."

Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In response to the Thursday's news article entitled, "Daily Texan questions A&M business school rank:"

The Battalion displayed a blatant disregard for the truth in its Thursday, July 22, article "Daily Texan questions A&M business school rank" ...

The Battalion's article quoted A&M officials' accusations regarding the Texan story as verified facts. It failed to obtain comment from The Daily Texan's editor and managing editor, who have the right to respond to allegations of wrongdoing or unethical reporting. It also failed to contact other universities or U.S. News and World Report for contextual information as the Texan did. This is sloppy reporting on the part of The Battalion.

Additionally, The Battalion falsely represented The Daily Texan's article as the assertions of one reporter. A news story is a result of an investigative process, not the unqualified opinion of one writer. The first statement of the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics is, "Seek truth and report it." The Daily Texan's article involved a month of research, two open records requests and interviews with at least nine people, three of whom were current or former A&M officials ...

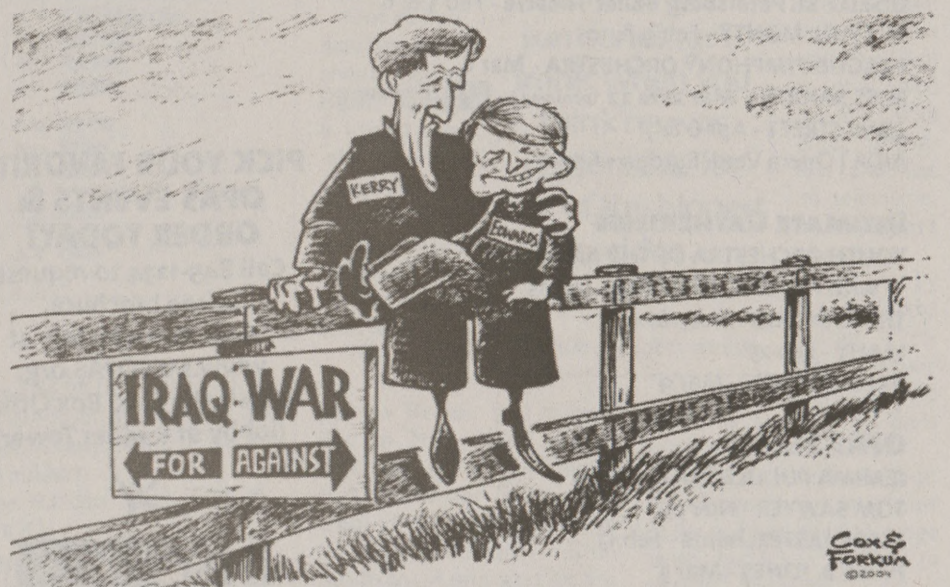
But while A&M officials quoted in The Battalion have attacked The Daily Texan's credibility, they still have not substantially attacked our reporting. Questions remain about the reliability of data supporting the A&M business school's rise in the 2003 U.S. News and World Report rankings. We encourage The Battalion staff to hold these officials accountable and find answers to these questions. And we stand by our story.

And we stand by our story.

The Daily Texan staff

Editor's Note:

The Battalion acknowledges that only one side of the controversial issue was reported in Thursday's paper, and that the newspaper's editing staff regrets that a higher news reporting standard was not maintained in the editing process.



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