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OUR OPINION

Civil liberties stripped by making Patriot Act permanent in America

Unless you were paying extremely close attention in light of recent international events, you might not even be aware that in a 257-171 vote, the U.S. House of Representatives decided to make permanent 14 of 16 provisions in the USA Patriot Act that were set to expire next year.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the House voted to extend two other provisions for 10 years, one of which allows roving wiretaps and another that allows library and medical records to be searched. Go ahead and keep telling yourself that ultimately, the provisions of the Patriot Act in all likelihood won't affect you. It's easier that way, after all.

But, what if you're taking Political Science/Administration of Justice 439 (Terrorism) and you're creating your own terrorist group, right down to who its target will be and when the estimated date the attack will occur? And what if you suddenly find that your friend of Muslim descent has quietly been detained while attempting to complete the project because of what appears to the U.S. government as "suspicious activities?"

What's funny, or perhaps ironic, is that there doesn't seem to be a great deal of concern from people in a nation that was founded on the ideals of freedom.

Is this because the media has done a lackluster job of covering the goings-on of our elected representatives? Are we simply distracted by bombings in London and elsewhere? Are we concerned that it's not a matter of if, but when, terrorists will attack American soil next, thus a more permanent act is one of the ways in which we can fight back most effectively?

Surely, the Patriot Act is the panacea of all our ills. By slowly eliminating the rights of Americans one by one, terrorists will no longer be able to successfully strike, regardless of an insatiable desire on their part to complete their deeds and to garner international infamy.

It's easy to suppose that the majority of Americans don't really care that our rights are being stripped away, because it's safe to assume that Susie from Centre County in Pennsylvania won't be detained for 24 hours at an airport. She's not of Greek-Lebanese descent and doesn't remotely resemble someone who might practice the Muslim religion.

And it's easy to suppose that somebody who drives a sport utility vehicle in suburbia, USA will feel more secure that the government is doing its best to protect its citizens.

But what is this act, and are its provisions really doing anything positive for the American people?

The implications of the Patriot Act stand to directly affect some of us and every single U.S. citizen in terms of basic civil liberties, yet nothing is being done to stop it and few seem to be concerned.

What's wrong with this picture?

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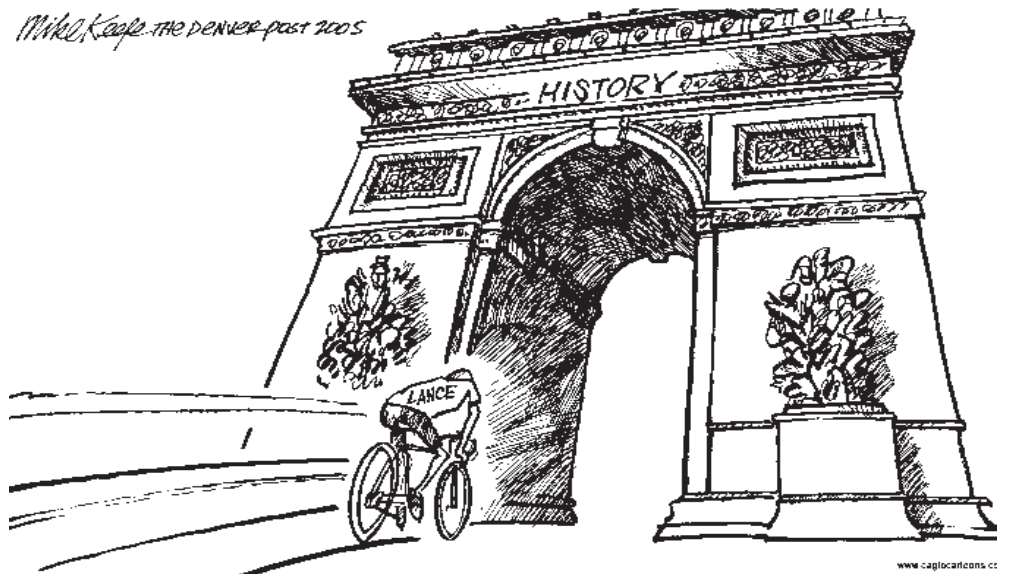
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■ Postal mail/In person:

The Daily Collegian
James Building
123 S. Burrowes St.
University Park, PA 16801-3882

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Mark Keefe - THE DENVER POST 2005



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Roberts needs to be questioned fiercely

John Roberts has been appointed by President George W. Bush as a new Supreme Court justice. It is absolutely crucial that the U.S. Senate obtains a clear picture of where he stands on issues, particularly *Roe v. Wade*. I believe that this case stands for more than just abortion.

If it is overturned, the definition of what falls under abortion can broaden. If this happens, stem cell research will become illegal (not just banned from federal funding) and we will continue to scientifically fall behind countries like South Korea.

Furthermore, the morning after pill and birth control pill could become illegal because some may define the effects of these pills as abortion. Thirty years after *Roe v. Wade*, it is clear that the case stands for more than just abortion.

I am not going to pass judgment on Roberts because I do not know enough about him, but I hope to

know enough about him when the Senate prepares to vote for his confirmation.

John Rutter
senior - civil engineering

Standards differ in terrorism, Iraq war

I know I could possibly be the only conservative in the nation who is under 50, however, party affiliation is not the issue here. Does one realize that the strength of the U.S. comes from standing for what we believe in? Other nations know we will "stick to our guns."

War is one thing, terrorist attacks are quite another. What makes people think we entered this war without proper cause? For people to recognize what terror attacks truly are, do we need to play Sept. 11 footage daily?

I am astonished that someone could imply that the U.S. fights by the same standards as terrorists. I am ashamed at how disrespectful such an implication is to those who

have served and died for our country.

I am proud of this great nation and I will always support it, regardless of who resides in the oval office. If our nation is so horrible, then don't let the door hit you on the way out.

Christine Keefer
senior - political science

Terrorists lack will; U.S. shows strength

Scott Morris is a moron. If you didn't get a chance to read his anti-American, captain of Saddam Hussein's and Osama bin Laden's fan club letter ("United States acts as terrorists to Iraq," July 21), you should take a look. I wouldn't doubt if the guy could even justify Hitler's holocaust. The guy states that we sent thousands of cruise missiles into Baghdad's population. What he didn't do was research to determine that we targeted only military equipment and twice the evil dictator himself.

What is really misleading is that

Mr. Morris doesn't know that almost every insurgent in Iraq is a foreign terrorist fighter. These terrorists believe that anyone different from them should die — not convert, but be killed. And these monsters who look like people also believe in suppressing women worse than you can imagine.

U.S. power frees people. We haven't always been completely focused on this, but in the end we have taken the lead to help the weak as we believe it is our duty to do so. No mystery surrounds the evil vile of filth that slaughtered innocent people in London; if these monsters were still alive, I'd finish them myself. All who are like them need to be put down like the dogs they are. They insult good moral Muslims who believe in living in peace with their brothers and sisters.

It's crap like Mr. Morris' thoughts that embolden terrorist cells in America, and perhaps even on this campus. They won't spare even you Mr. Morris, because you aren't a crazy Islamocist.

Bryan McKinney
Class of 2005

U-WIRE COLUMNS

Betting on future very risky, potentially rewarding

By Lindsye Forson

IT COULD BE SAID that every step in life is a gamble. Every change, every decision, every movement that we make is a risk — an implied trust in oneself and in the processes that govern the world in which we live — that may or may not turn out to be sound.

And with a boyfriend who's spending the week in Las Vegas and the World Series of Poker tournament hyped to ridiculous proportions on my television, the act of a person making the conscious choice to gamble has preoccupied my thoughts.

In truth, I don't like to gamble. I have never bought a lottery ticket, placed money on a card game, or anything else for that matter. I find dog and horse races completely objectionable.

But for all of last week, the deadline to accept a loan that would pay my tuition for law school loomed. I procrastinated, panicked and put

the form with the large and scary number out of sight and out of mind. The date approached, though, and as I began the lengthy bureaucratic process of accepting more money in loans than I would likely make in a year as a working journalist, I realized the stature of the gamble that I was about to make. I was staking nearly \$20,000 of yet-to-be-earned funds that I would not only survive my first year of law school, but also succeed as a lawyer in three years to come. Forget poker or blackjack — betting this much on my academic success, I realized, was a ridiculously dubious proposition.

I can't lie. I haven't really studied since high school. Sure, there have been moments during my undergraduate college career when I have concentrated my efforts and crammed for a night. I completed my projects, went to a majority of my classes and earned a respectable grade point average. But the kind of studying that law school is notorious for demanding

— nightly diligence over a period of months — is something that I haven't done in a very long time ... if memory serves, since elementary school.

And I can not honestly say that I've ever actually done my best academically. Because doing one's best requires the ultimate gamble: giving it all and then possibly failing, being a failure, and not being any better of a person. Short of giving a full effort, one can always save face for the critic who matters the most — one can always tell himself that the only reason he failed was because he chose not to put forth the requisite effort to succeed, not because he couldn't.

There is no such thing as a safe bet. Gambling always carries the risk of loss, never guarantees a win and is often ill-advised. But to succeed, I know I have to take risks — both material and immaterial, because unfortunately, schools do not accept one's potential as currency.

When you're gambling on your-

self, though, at least you can stack the deck. Whether or not I succeed in law school has little to do with random chance, but nearly everything to do with factors I control, including how determined I am and how much effort I choose to put forth, namely.

You can say that you believe in yourself, your own potential and your abilities easily enough, but there comes a time when you have to put your money where your mouth is. If you ever want to know who you can be and what you can really accomplish, it seems you have to have the guts to lay all of your chips on the table, with no guarantees and with what may look to many like bad odds.

"Faith in oneself is the best and safest course," Michelangelo once said. I hope he was right, because I have a rather large sum (with interest now compounding) staked on it.

Lindsye Forson writes for the Texas A&M Battalion.

Stealing wireless Internet is mooching, not crime

By Jim Foreman

EVERYBODY, from time to time, exercises his or her God-given right to mooch off his or her neighbor. There's no shame in it — whether you borrow a cup of sugar or watch Monday Night Football on your neighbor's conveniently placed high-definition television from your kitchen. In one way or another, we are all guilty of mooching to some degree.

Last week in St. Petersburg, Fla., Benjamin Smith was cruising around a neighborhood with his laptop looking for wireless Internet. Eventually, according to The Associated Press, he parked in front of the home of Richard Dinon and accessed the Internet through his wireless router. An innocent case of mooching turned into a third-degree felony when Dinon noticed Smith and called the police. Smith was cited for stealing wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) and was adoringly

named by the media as the "Wi-Fi Bandit." Next, they will be showing pictures of him on the news wearing a ski mask and a carrying a weapon of mass compatibility that will allegedly connect to anything electronic and cause it to detonate while simultaneously sending out unstoppable computer viruses.

Granted, having a creepy guy park his sport utility vehicle in front of your house and just sit there might be a reason for alarm, but it surely wouldn't warrant anything more than a misdemeanor. Unfortunately for Smith, unauthorized access to a wireless network is an automatic felony, even though the crime is no worse in principle than going through your neighbor's garbage, and this crime is even much more sanitary. In fact, if your dog bites your neighbor, you will be cited with a misdemeanor and have to pay a fine in the ballpark of \$200. If you borrow your neighbors' Wi-Fi, you become a felon and lose your right to vote.

And the only place that will still offer you a job is a fast food joint or a tattoo parlor, all because you borrow something that is readily available at any Starbucks or Barnes & Noble in the country.

Any college student with a wireless capable laptop or PDA and an empty wallet has probably bummed Wi-Fi from someone. Why shouldn't we? It's just floating around in the air. In fact, if anyone should be punished it should be the Wi-Fi for trespassing or invading our personal space. It could even be in your bed while you're sleeping. Now that's a felony.

Lawmakers argue that unauthorized Wi-Fi access could be used for illegal activities. Surely that was the case with Smith. He must have been running his illegal pornography business and/or terrorist group from the front seat of his SUV parked in front of a suburban home. Then again, he might have just been checking the movie listings, but you can never be too

sure. Whatever the case, he was mooching and he should have done it somewhere out of sight — like every other good-natured American — or else he should have gone to Starbucks. It's not like they're hard to find or anything. If you don't want someone to use your Wi-Fi, put a password on it. If you don't know how to do that, then you really shouldn't be toying with it anyway.

Mooching by itself is not a crime. It's one of those unwritten natural rights that didn't quite make it into the Constitution because the founding fathers didn't coin the term "mooching" until several years later. Unlike stealing cable, which is illegal and takes too much effort, mooching Wi-Fi is something that good neighbors tolerate because they've been taking beer out of the fridge in your garage for months.

Jim Foreman writes for the Texas A&M Battalion.