

Response to the Spec

Joe Simonson
Editor-in-Chief

The following is a response to the editorial that appeared in the most recent issue of the *Spectator*. That editorial can be found at <http://students.hamilton.edu/spectator/editorial/p/the-underestimated-value-of-political-correctness/view>.

The *Spectator*'s latest editorial only confirms the fact that Hamilton College has failed in its position as a "national leader in teaching students to write effectively, learn from each other and think for themselves." The several factual and logical errors in the *Spectator*'s piece are an embarrassment for not only Hamilton College, but also student newspapers nationwide.

First and foremost, the *Spectator* and *Enquiry* share no similarities other than the fact that they are student-run print publications with words on them. *Enquiry* has never billed itself as a news publication. *Enquiry* provides a platform for political commentary and analysis by students, professors, and scholars from around the country and fully expects any college-aged individual to be familiar with most of the issues being featured. I don't consider myself a journalist in the same way the *Spectator* shouldn't call itself a newspaper because of its

cozy relationship with the school administration and its position on the self-serving, censorship-driven, campus media board.

I truly wonder who exactly was in charge of editing this latest attempt to shame a fellow student's right of free expression—a particularly egregious offense for the official newspaper of record by undergraduates on this campus. The authors of this editorial demonstrate the sorry state of expression at Hamilton College by imploring my writers to "explain their position without inciting unwarranted backlash." I'm not sure if the authors of this piece know the definitions of the words they are using. How is one supposed to protect him- or herself from something that is unwarranted?

Further, is the *Spectator* actually encouraging students to capitulate to extremism? To be fair, after the numerous instances in which Alexander Hamilton Institute and *Enquiry* members have been the subject of death threats, verbal and sexual harassment, the defacement of private property, and just straight bullying, the idea seems tempting. Many on the *Spectator*'s staff are undoubtedly familiar with at least some of these offenses, but lack the integrity to acknowledge them in any shape or form. What's more important, it appears, is

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, February 4

Enquiry Meeting
Open to anyone interested
7:00 p.m. | KJ 124

the fact that an undergraduate printed a few factual statistics about the current state of global Islam and stood in solidarity with the 12 individuals murdered by an organized group who oppose free expression.

In some ways, I pity the *Spectator*'s position that publications should be more in-touch with the "expectations" of their audiences. Not only have I rarely heard any positive feedback about a single article ever printed in the *Spectator* in my entire time at Hamilton College (whereas *Enquiry* prides itself in the fact that it was quickly funded by supportive college alumni), the *Spectator* operates under the impression that its audience expects the school newspaper to run editorials victim-blaming the deeply wounded people of Paris. The publication of this latest editorial has made it clear that milquetoast charlatans run our school newspaper and only provide a disservice to its fellow students. Such disgraceful reactions by college students to the threat of intellectual diversity would be entertaining if it were not so disturbing.

2016: Ready for Jeb?

Alex Klosner | *Staff Writer*

The historic midterms last November proved to be a national repudiation of the Democratic Party and a rejection of President Obama's policies. As Obama's political influence continues to diminish, the GOP hopes to continue its momentum into 2016 and put a Republican back in the White House.

Media coverage has shifted to former Florida Governor Jeb Bush after he expressed an interest in running for president. Bush established the "Right to Rise" political action committee last month, allowing him to test the waters for a potential run. He is the first major Republican to actively explore a 2016 presidential campaign. In the primary Bush

will likely face a congested field of contenders from conservative evangelical Mike Huckabee to business "outsider" Carly Fiorina. To the satisfaction of many Republicans, Mitt Romney announced last week that he will not attempt a third campaign. Romney's endorsement would serve as an extremely valuable piece of political capital. Potential candidates are scrambling to seize Romney's vast network of wealthy donors.

Unlike several potential GOP candidates, Jeb Bush is capable of raising massive amounts of money. Many former Romney supporters are directing their money and loyalty to a possible Jeb campaign. New York investment banker Patrick Durkin has already hosted a fundraiser for Bush. Chicago investor Craig Duchossois has shifted his fundraising efforts

towards Jeb. The controversial media mogul Rupert Murdoch recently stated: "I like Jeb very much, he's moving very cleverly, very well." Jeb's unequivocal appeal to the moderate and affluent factions of the conservative movement positions him well against "non-establishment" candidates such as Ted Cruz and Rand Paul.

Many analysts question Jeb's viability in a Republican primary. Although he may have the support of wealthy donors and the conservative media, one of Jeb's greatest obstacles will be potential alienation of the Republican base. Bush has received considerable criticism from conservatives for his support of common core standards and his position on immigration. Bush favors a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, and turned off many conservatives when he said that illegal immigration is "an act of love, an act of commitment to your family. I honestly think it's a different kind of crime." Despite Jeb's more moderate positions, he remains appealing to the GOP base because of his pro-life agenda and strong support of the second amendment. As governor of Florida between 1999 and 2007, Jeb cut taxes and

discontinued affirmative action policies for state jobs and university admissions. Bush currently leads in several polls among likely Republican voters, but it is too early to regard these polls as legitimate indicators.

In response to Jeb's possible run, the Democratic National Committee released a series of "talking points." They predictably accused Bush of ignoring the interests of the middle class and minorities. Not surprisingly, the DNC could not refrain from mentioning Jeb's unpopular brother: "we already know what to expect from a Bush presidency because we've seen it before." Apparently, surnames affect one's ability to govern. The absurd assertion from both the left and right that "we don't need another Bush in the White House" lacks merit, but unfortunately Jeb must deal with the negative connotations of his last name.

Republicans must promote articulate, knowledgeable, and serious candidates in the primary in order to achieve success in the general election. Potential "candidates" such as Sarah Palin and Donald Trump risk transforming a crucial primary into a reality TV show.

Keep Gas Prices Low

Amy Elinski | *Staff Writer*

The last time I filled up my gas tank over winter break, it cost me \$14.01. With gas in my home state of Arizona averaging \$1.898 per gallon, and \$1.75 near my home, I was purchasing some of the cheapest gas in the country. As of January 19, the national average for a gallon of gas was \$2.066, according to gasbuddy.com, the cheapest it's been in a decade, excluding a six month period at the start of 2009 when gas prices suddenly dropped. Americans have been celebrating at the pump as they fill up their tanks.

Congress is looking to take advantage of the extra change Americans now have in their pockets. Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee and Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut have proposed an increase to the federal gas tax of 12 cents over the next two years. The current federal gas tax sits at 18.4 cents per gallon, and with an average state tax of 30.1 cents per gallon, the average American pays 48.5 cents per gallon in taxes, a 23.5% tax. Here in New York, the total gas tax is 68.7 cents, the second highest in the nation. The federal gas tax was last raised in 1993 under President Clinton, and it was met with much chagrin by the American people.

The gas tax is a regressive tax. It hurts lower income individuals more than any other taxpayers. Lower income Americans pay a higher percentage of their income for gas. For them, an additional 12 cents can make a big difference, especially when gas prices inevitably go back up. Politicians claim to care so much about these lower income Americans, yet they continue to suggest bills such as this one which hurt them, continually trapping them in the cycle of poverty.

This biggest cause of the price decrease is the booming oil industry in America. Between new oil refineries and the increase in popularity of fracking, companies have been steadily increasing their fuel production. In recent years, due to the high price of crude oil, companies have found it more and more attractive to get involved with the oil industry. As more companies enter the race, competition and supply increases, drastically reducing the price. In 2014, the United States became the largest producer of oil in the world, overtaking Saudi Arabia. Our growing independence in oil production has allowed the price of gas to decrease substantially.

With the price of gasoline steadily declining, Americans are driving more frequently. As Americans can justify filling

their tanks more regularly, the government is already earning more in tax revenue than in previous years from the gas tax. To keep prices low and discourage an increase in gas prices in the future, the solution is obvious: do not raise the gas tax. Instead, the government should encourage projects such as the Keystone XL Pipeline which will increase domestic fuel production and keep prices low. When more Americans can afford to fill up their tanks, the government will generate more revenue from the current gas tax. To increase the tax would be harmful to Americans, especially those the government claims to protect.

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