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What the debates should've given us



Last week I sat down in front of my television to prepare myself for the intellectual waterboarding that we call the presidential debate. The theme of the debate was supposed to be national security and foreign policy, but, as with all public debates, it was a series of expertly dodged questions and a "take-no-risk" philosophy.

I thought maybe times had changed, but I was wrong. I had to turn it off after 90 seconds because I feared I would start mutilating body parts to stop the pain from what I was witnessing.

Why is it that something as important as the United States' presidency can be dragged into a series of three meaningless 90-minute sessions? Why can I get more information about the views of these candidates from the New York Times than from their actual versions? It may be because of the "take-no-risk" philosophy that dominates politics.

After reading the transcript of the debate the next day, one sentence in particular stuck out. It was actually said by moderator Jim Lehrer, and it foreshadowed the complete debate.

Lehrer said, "All right, let's go back to my question." He said this after ... (drumroll) ... one question. The candidates dodged the first question of the night with pointless posturing and politically necessary caveats, so Lehrer had to ask the question again, four minutes later.

Where is the risk? Taking a predictable stance while saying what your audience wants to hear is exactly like playing the tie in a sport. It requires basic knowledge and patience, and you hope your opponent stops actually paying attention at a level necessary for victory and then you skate away even. There is no risk involved.

I want politicians who will say that they don't have the specific answer for everything. I understand they aren't experts in all aspects of government — that's why they have a cabinet.

I want someone who can go 20 seconds without comparing Main Street and Wall Street because, in the end, buzzwords mean nothing. Talk about the crisis and how it can be solved and how that way will work better than another way.

I want them to say they voted on something because of party policy or that they flip-flopped to help them appear more appealing. I want the arguments in these debates to get so heated that there is an awkward feeling that things could get violent. Only then would I start to think the presidential candidates have personal feelings attached to what they are saying instead of pleasing the Howard Deans and Mike Duncans of the world.

Above all, I want politicians who can take those risks and not be afraid to take on the media or their opponents. That shows that they're human, and I'll vote for a human over a politician any day.

Graham is a Columbus, Ohio, graduate student in exercise physiology.

FROM THE DRAWING BOARD



TYLER DOEHRING

What other crisis are we forgetting?



Will the financial crisis wake us up to the climate crisis?

It may be difficult to see how the two are related, but this week we've learned that Americans were so concerned with how much money they had at Wall Street's closing bell that they didn't hear the floundering stock market's warning bells.

Those bells fell on deaf ears, and the environment is especially telling when it comes to how deaf we've become: We were so concerned with the price at the pump that we missed how much we are consuming at the expense of the environment. Sound familiar?

Unless the United States starts addressing global warming now, we might have to spend \$700 billion to bail out the planet, too. But \$700 billion is a nice figure compared to the \$19 trillion estimate from the European Commission.

The subprime mortgage crisis came from short-term thinking. The number of subprime mortgages increased dramatically

from 1990 to 2000, mostly from increased competition from online lenders, according to the Home Buying Institute. This meant that lenders had to broaden their scope and give loans to people who usually would have been turned away because of bad credit scores or previous foreclosures.

So the quest to make an extra buck is going to cost the entire country a few hundred billion.

As usual, the truth is in the numbers. The number of home foreclosures in the United States has climbed year by year. So far in 2008, about 1.4 million homes have been foreclosed on. But 1.2 million homes were foreclosed on in 2006, and the economy survived that.

The media (finally) did their math and are ringing the alarm bells. But when the same information is presented to them about global warming, why do they seem to ignore it?

When Jim Hansen, a researcher at NASA who is known for his testimony to Congress about climate change in the 1980s, visited the University Sept. 22, he nearly spoon-fed the alarm bells to the audience. He said that we've passed the safe level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and that we are approaching the point of irreversible changes. No country in the

world has taken steps to drastically reduce its carbon emissions, and we keep burning fossil fuels even when we're told we are doing harm to the entire planet.

So why isn't anyone talking about this?

Because global warming can't put up foreclosure signs around the neighborhood, we don't see anything in our backyards yet. And unfortunately by the time we do notice, it will be far too late. We see distant problems — the Arctic ice cap melting, a higher rate of species extinction and higher global temperatures — but it's difficult to relate those problems back to the individual.

Just like in the subprime crisis, only when the for-sale signs started to appear did people start wondering. And only then did we realize how far back the problem went.

With the defeat of the House bill two days ago, Americans are finally starting to realize that we can't just keep thinking in the short-term when dealing with problems that affect the entire nation.

Now, how long will we remember it?

Keith is a Wichita junior in journalism and environmental studies. She is the Kansan opinion editor.

editorials around the nation

What will happen to North Korea next?

The health status of North Korea's Kim Jong Il is still a matter of speculation.

The South Korean intelligence service told Korean legislative leaders that it was likely that the North Korean dictator had a stroke, but that he has been treated and has recovered enough to talk and walk.

Speculation about Kim Jong Il's health became rampant when he was not present for the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the North Korean state.

The United States and the countries surrounding North Korea have been

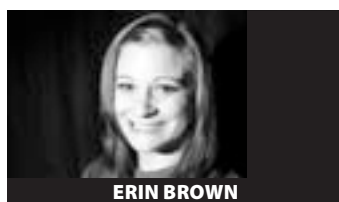
involved in talks for years to get the "hermit kingdom" to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

None of Kim Jong Il's three sons (or anybody else) has been declared the likely successor. North Korea's neighbors are afraid that a succession struggle might induce chaos.

It may seem strange, but for the moment we hope this despicable dictator stays healthy enough to anoint a successor — or for factions to maneuver in advance — and avoid instability in a regime that richly deserves to crumble.

— *The (Colorado Springs, Colo.) Gazette*
Sept. 19 editorial

What we think about the financial problems



While a quick \$700 billion fix may steady the economy for the short term, the results will not yield long-term benefits. Financial institutions will surely continue their greedy ways once they know the federal government is financing them. Thus the problem will not be solved, but temporarily fixed. If the government simply bails out the financial institutions with no consequences, the mess will be left for our generation to clean up.



I love the idea of this \$700 billion bailout. I hope the next time I go to a casino, the federal government decides that my carelessness with my money warrants their saving my risky ass. Since when did the gov-

ernment become an insurance company that backs risky loans? Did I miss when this started? If I'd known about this even being a possibility, I would've invested all of my money in one of these high-risk markets and would be able to pay off college in no time. None of them deserve any money.



As far as I can tell, the insane privilege that this country affords the big business got us into this mess, so it's only fitting that we hold the executives' hands to get out of it.

A shady business model was exposed and Treasury secretary Henry Paulson suggested the taxpayers bear the \$700 billion consequence. Without giving taxpayers share in ownership in return, the government would essentially be fundraising to protect the most powerful business leaders in the country from their bad decisions. Luckily, Congress reacted to Paulson's plan with similar skepticism. Though no

deal has been reached, I worry that the fall-out plan will ask too much of us and too little of the people at fault.



Financial disasters like this don't just magically appear. It has been a long time coming because this nation has its priorities completely mixed up. We increase military spending to fight a war abroad when the real fight is in our wallets. As a nation, we need to learn not to live outside our means. If you can't afford that brand-new plasma TV, taking out a loan you don't ever plan on paying back isn't a smart move. Just because the government likes to solve its problems by throwing money it doesn't actually have at them doesn't mean you should do the same. Let's fix this thing ourselves instead of relying on more inept people to fix it for us. I'd like to be able to walk to campus without lugging a wheelbarrow full of cash with me just to pay for lunch at the Union.



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I'm so glad Taylor Swift wrote the soundtrack to my life. Thank you!

One of my ex-boyfriends is listed as "Tree" in my cell phone contacts.

When I was 12, Chuck Norris gave me my first and only birds and the bees talk. The only thing he said is that sexist men make \$11,000 more a year than non-sexist men.

I think the reason that the graffiti in the little boys room in Watson hasn't been cleaned is because the janitors are eager to know the final score of the booze/weed debate on the wall.

Did anyone happen to find a mini DV tape that says Kansas Volleyball on it? My life kind of depends on it.

I think Facebook stalking should be called faulking. Stop faulking me!

Suck it, Trebek.

JuicyCampus.com makes me ashamed to be a Jayhawk. Seriously people, get a life. All this Greek vs. GDI shit makes me sick.

If I die from second-hand smoke, I can almost guarantee it's from being on this campus.

Dear Free for All, now my dad AND mom are on Facebook. What the hell?! What am I supposed to do about my morally questionable status updates?

That's why they invented the limited profile feature, person whose parents have Facebook.

All of you who ride bikes, stay away from me.

If you're going to sleep in class, why would you sit in the front row?

The guy behind me in math smells like the basement of a frat: beer and vomit.

Any cute gals up for early morning make out sessions?

This is what we get for re-electing Dubya. Half of America put us here. The Republicans screwed us over by electing bozo the clown for president. Damn you, Republicans! Damn you!

To my lovely girlfriend of one year, seven months, and six days, stop farting and burping.

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