

OPINION & EDITORIAL

Knockin' on heaven's door

by **Badger Herald Editorial Board**

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On the University of Wisconsin System's application for a Resident Assistant position, could a candidate, through a check box promise, surrender normal student rights on attending the position? Thankfully, such may soon be an impossibility.

For some time now, UW schools have been free to ban RAs from leading certain activities, such as bible studies, within their dorm rooms. On Wednesday, UW System President Kevin Reilly acted on the counsel of a group of residence-life professionals, student affairs officers and students, recommending a laudable proposal to the Board of Regents to guarantee resident assistants certain rights bestowed upon other residents of university housing. If adopted, this plan would allow RAs all of the freedoms presently enjoyed by John Q. Resident. In a world-class university, we should accept nothing less.

Frankly, it's perplexing that the UW System currently has no policy regarding this issue. The idea that a particular group of students can be denied rights enjoyed by their neighbors is terribly troublesome. With that said, Mr. Reilly must be applauded for recommending the universal implementation of a policy that would, once and for all, end the unjust prohibition of select activities of resident assistants.

Further, Mr. Reilly's proposal addresses a potential problem that could arise from house fellows' newly acquired freedom – that of possible solicitation/intimidation of residents by RAs with strong ideological views. It is absolutely crucial to make sure no residents are forced to report to an RA who berates them for their unwillingness to declare Christ their personal lord and savior. The proposed policy, which includes a clause preventing RAs from using "their positions to inappropriately influence, pressure, or coerce student residents to attend or participate," would ensure that RAs refrain from putting any such pressure on residents.

This board commends the refreshingly expeditious manner in which the UW System addressed this controversial issue. We hope the Board of Regents also works swiftly and decisively to adopt this common-sense policy when it comes before the board.

So long as resident assistants refrain from proselytization and remember their primary duty, serving dorm residents there is no reason they should be denied the rights guaranteed to all other residents.

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