Letter from the Editor
Judy McDermott
Praying to live?

Freedom of religion is undoubtedly a vital component to American democracy. As citizens of this nation, we are privileged to choose our own faith path, regardless of its Christian or non-Christian orientation. With this freedom, we are also entitled to practice according to our faiths in whatever manner we choose. However, this practicing element can sometimes pose problems in other realms of society—sanctified practices sometimes enter a gray area between religious freedom and blatant illegality. The state of Colorado is, right at this moment, dealing with this gray area. And this time, the grayness also exists between the more indispensable extremes of life and death.

Three weeks ago, a 13-year-old Colorado girl died from diabetes complications. Her parents denied her medical treatment because it was against their religious grounds. The parents were a part of the General Assembly and Church of the First Born, a denomination that believes in prayer over medical care. This marks the third death in two years of children from this church. The others include an 18-day-old infant who died of meningitis, and a three-day-old infant who died of a heart complication. All three deaths may have been prevented with modern medicine, yet were not even given the chance.

The recent deaths have triggered much support for state legislation that would prevent par- ents from using religion as a justification against prosecution for withheld medical treatment—people are beginning to debate the rights of children against their parents’ willingness to marry the child to the church practitioner. But is it right to allow parents to deny their child medical treatment when they are in danger? Furthermore, when the odds are in modern medicine’s favor over that of prayer, shouldn’t we demand that a child be lead down the logical path to health, rather than the mys- terreous one? Essentially, children must be guaranteed a constitutional right to live when they can- not clearly express their wishes regarding health issues.

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