In reference to the commentary that was published on April 12, 2006, entitled “You Can Leave Your Hat on (and Your Shoes, Too!)”:

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was created in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as part of the Aviation & Transportation Security Act signed into law by President George W. Bush on November 19, 2001. TSA’s mission is to protect the nation’s transportation systems by ensuring the freedom of movement for people and commerce. There are 43,000 Transportation Security Officers ensuring the safety of the traveling public at 450 commercial airports nationwide.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the situation described in the commentary involving a passenger going through the walk-through metal detector wearing his shoes. The link that author Karl Rhomberg provides clearly states that: “You are not required to remove your shoes before you enter the walk-through metal detector. However, TSA screeners may encourage you to remove them before entering the metal detector as many types of footwear will require additional screening even if the metal detector does not alarm.”

In an effort to help keep the security lines moving, our Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) may encourage passengers to remove certain types of shoes that will require the additional screening. Our highly trained workforce is not only looking for metal. As terrorist threats change, the agency must shift its resources to focus on the greatest threat and that is explosives.

The items on the prohibited items list (see (http://www.tsa.gov) and the procedures in place exist for a reason. They are there to ensure the safety of the traveling public and to ensure that no explosives and weapons make it on board the aircraft. I assure you that we are safer than we were prior to 9/11 and it is due in large part to the dedication and excellent job performed by our 43,000 TSOs nationwide. Each day these men and women go to their airports never forgetting what happened on 9/11 and work to make sure it doesn’t happen again. They are there to serve the public by making civil aviation safe and secure.

For more information on how passengers can do their part by coming prepared, please visit (http://www.tsa.gov
).

Lara Uselding
Midwest Public Affairs Manager
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Protester Is Hateful, Not Christian

The protest last month at the funeral of Army Specialist Daniel L. Sesker in Ogden is another sign of extremism and hatred in American politics.

This spring, the Iowa Legislature approved and Governor Vilsack signed a law restricting

protests at funerals. In the Iowa Senate, we voted unanimously to protect mourners from a Kansas group that travels the country from funeral to funeral as part of a campaign against gays.

As an Iowan, I'm amazed that we even needed to pass this bill. Who could possibly be so warped as to protest at funerals?

I found the answers when I learned more about Reverend Fred Phelps and his followers. Phelps says he is motivated by Christianity. I disagree. I think it is much more accurate to say he is driven by hatred.

In fact, I think Reverend Phelps and others like him have been driven crazy by their hatred for gay and lesbian Americans. One of the first Phelps funeral "protests" was the funeral of Matthew Shepard, a young man beaten and left to die in Wyoming because he was gay.

Once a person gives themselves over to hate, they've started on a downward path. The Phelps group now welcomes every new tragedy as an excuse to spew forth their hatred and extremism.

On April 18, the burial of an Iowa soldier in Ogden became their latest "opportunity." That was a shame for all Iowans, especially the family and friends of Daniel Sesker.

Iowa is relatively free of the politics of hate that seems to consume other states. Let's keep it that way by treating each other with respect and by focusing on improving education, expanding health care, and growing Iowa's economy.

State Senator Joe Bolkcom
Iowa City, Iowa

Nussle Shouldn't Take Tobacco Money

Gubernatorial candidate Jim Nussle would like to thank your children for smoking, dipping, and chewing nicotine.

According to the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund, Nussle has received $40,000 in campaign contributions from tobacco companies since 1999. If accepting kickbacks from Joe Camel is one of Nussle's moral values, then I'd hate to see what his immoral values are.

By contrast, gubernatorial candidate Ed Fallon is not only pushing for clean elections but also putting his money where his mouth is. Fallon is the only candidate who is refusing donations from PACs, paid lobbyists, and large donors. Our next governor should be a candidate funded by the people, not Joe Camel.

Jason Hsu
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Corrections, Clarifications, and Proper Credit

• Last week, Michael Oberfield – director of Circa '21's current production of *Aesop's Dynamic Duo* – called the *Reader* office regarding the review ("Absolutely Fabulist") that ran in Issue 579. He generously ceded credit for much of the show's success to his choreographer, Justin Charles Gebhardt (including actor Bret Churchill's "appropriately flamboyant" entrance). Oberfield wished to have Gebhardt's contributions properly acknowledged, and also mentioned that *Aesop*'s production staff had hoped to have body mics for the cast – regarding the occasionally spotty sound quality, I wrote that "body mics would have proven helpful" – but with 18 singing and dancing Cats currently using them at the venue, none were available. I've had cats. They do tend to steal things.
– Mike Schulz

• In the Dining Guide published last week, the hours for Restaurant 225 at the Figge were incorrect. The restaurant is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, and from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays. Any further corrections to Dining Guide entries should be sent to (food@rcreader.com).

• Also in last week's Dining Guide, we failed to acknowledge that the cover photograph was taken by Quinn Kirkpatrick at Restaurant 225.