Violence
S.C. Legislature should pass bill to extend law against rape

South Carolina's Legislature should join 37 other states and adopt a law to make marital rape a crime.

Under present law in this state, rape is not a crime unless a couple has legally separated. The new bill would acknowledge that sexual assault is illegal for couples who have not cured a court order saying they are separated. The bill also recognizes the crime of sexual battery if the couple still lives together.

Rape is not an act of passion, desire or lust. It is violent sexual behavior, and it is a heinous, denpicable crime. A marriage certificate does not eliminate the possibility of rape. If anything, the lack of a law allows marriage to be used as an excuse for violent sexual behavior, something that cannot be excused under any circumstances.

Many women who enter shelters for battered women report that they had been sexually assaulted by their husbands, but no one knows exactly how many rapes occur within marriages.

Opponents of the bill claim that women will falsely accuse their husbands of marital rape. But under the proposal, the charge would require the same evidence as any rape case. False claims would be found out, and valid claims would lead to convictions.

UCS students, faculty and staff should get involved by letting their representatives know that violent sexual behavior will not be tolerated in any form in South Carolina. Petitions and letters can be extremely effective in getting a bill passed. On the other hand, silence about the issue of marital rape will not get results, and this tragedy will continue.

The status of women in the state of South Carolina is already low enough without the problem of marital rape. The Legislature must send a message that it cares about the women of South Carolina and passes this bill.

Letters to the editor

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