

# OUR VIEW State board, UI right to decline settlement

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**By Lee Rozen, for the editorial board**

If you can be lying in a bed in a fraternity house on the campus of the University of Idaho and - merely by rolling over - fall 25 feet out a window onto concrete, well, something's wrong.

The 19-year-old woman who fell and was seriously injured Sept. 10, 2009, had been reported drinking at frat parties that night despite being underage. Also, she was in the bed with a member of the fraternity. Those facts add complications. They don't change the basic problem.

What, exactly, is wrong here, and who, exactly, is responsible, is still to be debated in court.

Meanwhile, the girl's parents told the University of Idaho, the Idaho State Board of Education, the national Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and the Idaho Alpha Chapter of SAE they would drop their suit against the four bodies for \$1 million.

The UI and the state board have respectfully declined the offer. There's no report on the response of SAE and its Alpha Chapter, which own the fraternity house.

Often, it seems, government agencies settle lawsuits to avoid going to court. Some say they settle too easily, because it's not their money they're handing over. We're glad to see that didn't happen here.

In this case, the UI and state board have at least one precedent on their side that says that even though the fraternity house is on campus, they have no responsibility for what goes on there. The precedent that lets them hope the judge in this case simply will dismiss them from the suit comes from a decision involving another fall at another fraternity house at the UI.

It's probably a cliché to say that we see a pattern here.

It's not that there is drinking involved in fraternity and sorority events. It's not even that there is underage drinking involved. It's not even that some drink too much.

It's that it seems some Greek parties are structured to encourage excessive drinking with "games" that pressure reluctant drinkers to over indulge. Whether that was the case here no doubt would come out in the trial.

The Greek system has many fine services and traditions. This is not one of them.