

## EDITORIAL

### VOTE FOR BONFIRE

#### Students speak out

The democratic process will be tested in Aggieland this week, and it is up to students to see it through. Participating in the Student Government Association's Bonfire survey is the only way to preserve a key element of Bonfire tradition: That students have a say in the planning and construction process. There comes a time when students need to stop complaining and start taking action about Bonfire 2002. This week the time has come, as the deadline for student input for Bonfire is Friday. Students have the opportunity to give as little or as much input as they would like — the most important thing is that everyone contribute.

This week, students with a Neo email account can go to <http://vote.tamu.edu> and enter their opinions online. Locations across campus will also be set up for student voting. Questions vary from the Bonfire design to how much of a role they want to play in preparing for next fall's Bonfire.

For students who feel that casting their vote is irrelevant, forums are being held today in 292 MSC at 10 a.m., 2 p.m., and 6 p.m. This is the type of responsibility that administrators and Bonfire activists have been urging students to assume and this is the last chance. The decision to have Bonfire this fall has been left in the hands of students, but if students do not log on to a computer or go by a voting site, then they do not deserve the role they have been given.

The opportunity to attend the last forums before the Jan. 18 deadline should not be underrated. The best opinion is an educated opinion.

Not only is this the last chance for student input, but officials involved have said that if student participation is lacking, plans may be hindered for Bonfire 2002. Students should not be hindered by their own laziness. They should speak out and not allow anyone to take anything away from the tradition of Aggie Bonfire. It is time to put away the egos and bitterness about how Bonfire once was and take a stand for how Bonfire will be.

## THE BATTALION

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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: [mailcall@thebatt.com](mailto:mailcall@thebatt.com)

### CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UNCARTOONIST ©

### MAIL CALL

#### Make a statement, help keep the fire

Fellow Aggies, this week could be our final chance to save Aggie Bonfire. The steering committee has worked hard to produce a plan that will satisfy the administration's requirements.

This week we have a chance to show our support for this amazing tradition by answering the student feedback survey.

I know many are disappointed with the changes made in Bonfire's design. But, the current designs, presented on the Bonfire website, are the safest and most practical available to Texas A&M.

If you have never experienced Bonfire then you have missed out on an extraordinary tradition that has changed the lives of Aggies for the past century. Please show your support so you and future Aggies can continue to share this tradition.

Bonfire veterans need to let the underclassmen know what Aggie Bonfire is all about. There is definitely something lacking at Texas A&M without this great tradition. Please show your support by answering the student feedback

survey. It only takes a minute and it could save 90 years of tradition.

Matt Warner  
Class of 2002

#### Uncartoon has bigoted view

In response to Jan. 14 uncartoon.

I know *The Batt* is supposed to make us question the norm, and the desire is to raise eyebrows and to shock us. However, I think that the editors neglected their duties when they allowed yesterday's cartoon. Yes, it's shocking. Yes, it raises eyebrows. Yes, it's racist. Yes, it could bring the full force of the NAACP down on the University and *The Battalion*. And the image of the dumb Aggie is perpetuated.

So much for distinction of being known as a world-class University, where all the great minds wish to be.

More like a world-class bigoted school where all the great rednecks wish to be. For the first time ever, I'm ashamed of this school.

Eric Irwin  
Class of 1989

# Just compensation

## Sept. 11 funds should be used elsewhere

Several months

after the Sept.

11 terrorist

attacks, discussion

has turned to monetary

issues. The

United States gov-

ernment has proposed

approximately \$1.5

million settlement to

each of the families

affected by the attack,

on the stipulation that

they agree not to sue

the government. In

light of the situation,

this offer seems more

than fair. However, a

few of those affected

seem less than grateful

for attempts to ease

the situation, complain-

ing that the settlement

is not comparable with

their lost family

members' earning

potential.

Although this may be

true, these complaints

seem negligible when

viewed in the larger

picture. The attacks

brought an outpouring

of funds from Americans

of all walks of life. Families

that will never see

\$100,000, let alone \$1

million, donated their

money in an attempt to

ease the suffering of

the affected families.

The money was not

meant to be spent helping

the extremely rich maintain

a selfish, wasteful

lifestyle. As Callie Ann

Martin said in *The*

*Dallas Morning News*,

"I sent in my money

so families would have

food — not to keep up

some millionaire's

Mercedes."

The irony in the situation

is that the less affluent

families, those who could

really use the help, are

not the ones who are

complaining. The people

who are dissatisfied are

those who are used to a

lavish lifestyle. Predictably,

they argue the government

should pay in proportion

to the income of the

deceased loved one.

The United States is the

richest country in the

world, and it is highly

unlikely that, with the

amount of aid being

offered, the families

affected by the attack

are going to starve. Even

the poor families in

America are only poor

by comparison, as chances

are they have gotten to

use heated, running

water and electricity at

some point in time — a

chance many people in

underdeveloped countries

will never have.

The ungrateful reactions

of some families illustrates

that much of Americans'

money would have been

more useful if donated

elsewhere. Give \$20 to

the average American,

and it will buy him or

her dinner. Give it to a

Third World family, and

it will be more money

than they will see in a

year. It may very well

save someone's life.

If someone wants to



JESSICA CRUTCHER

there are plenty of legitimate groups that provide much-needed aid to people who will not complain that they were not given enough money to pay the mortgage on their mansion. Net Aid is an organization that provides supplies and education to combat the AIDS epidemic in Africa. The United Nations Children's Fund combats childhood illnesses, provides care and fights for the rights of children around the world.

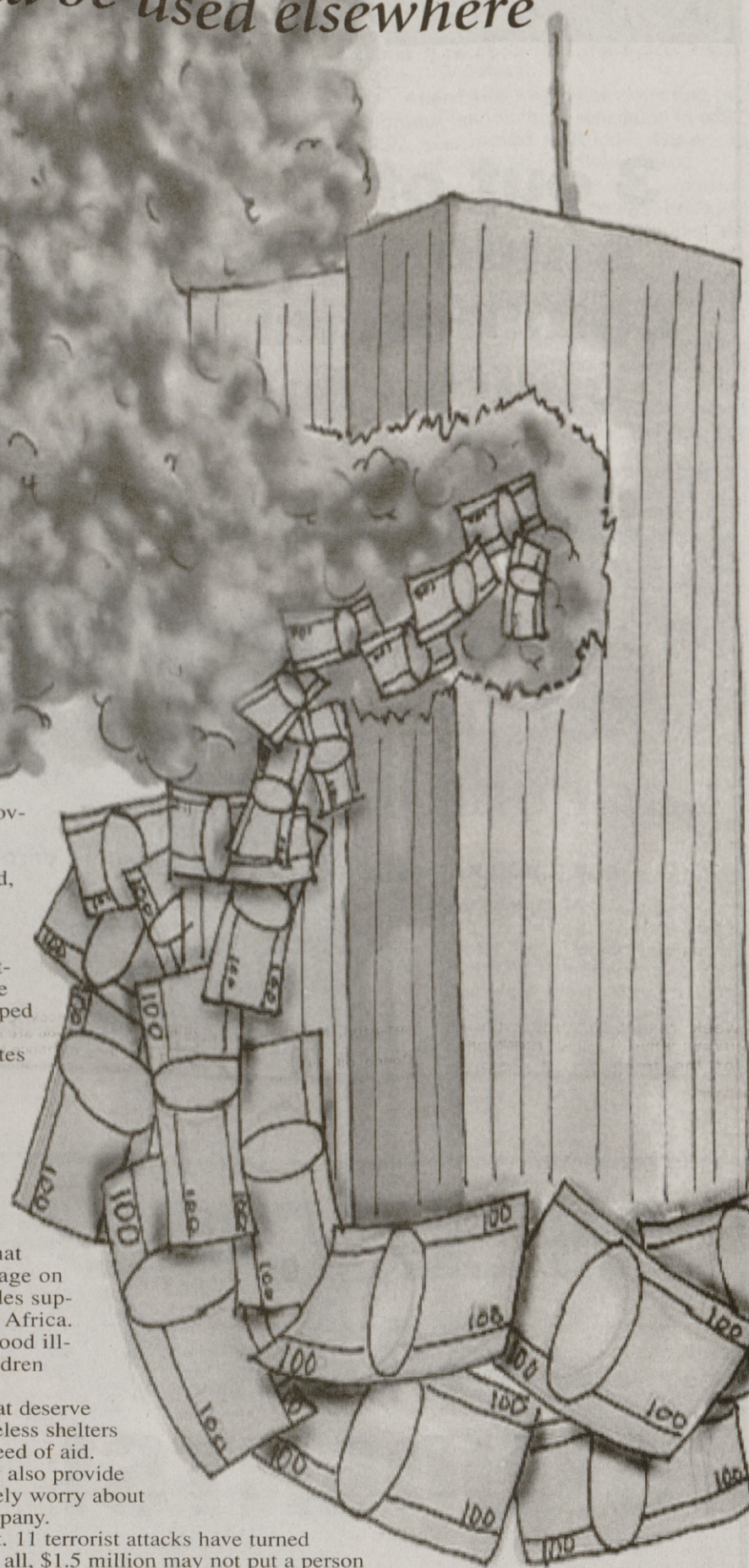
However, there are countless American charities that deserve just as much help. Most cities have privately run homeless shelters and battered women's shelters that are constantly in need of aid. Nationwide organizations such as The Salvation Army also provide help to those in need, although some donors legitimately worry about their money getting lost in the bureaucracy of the company.

It is regrettable that some of the victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have turned out to be so mercenary in the face of generosity. After all, \$1.5 million may not put a person on a level with Bill Gates, but it is a generous way to help someone start his or her life over.

While many agree that carpal tunnel syndrome does not follow the normal definition of a disability, it is a work-related injury, and people should be protected from losing their jobs.

A *New York Times* editorial argued that suffering from this type of disability should not make these people unemployed. The fewer people unemployed, the

Jessica Crutcher is a senior journalism major.



DIANE SUAREZ • THE BATTALION

# Discrimination at work

## Courts should not limit scope of Disability Act

On Jan. 9, the Supreme Court narrowed the scope of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, decided that work-related disabilities, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, is not a major life activity and therefore does not allow a person to sue under the ADA.

The case arises from a worker, Ella Williams, at a Toyota manufacturing plant in Georgetown, Ky., who developed the repetitive motion injury while working. Toyota first accommodated her by changing her job assignment, but when new tasks were added to her assignment, her disability became a problem again. She was fired, and in turn, she sued under the ADA.

While carpal tunnel syndrome may not be a disability that affects important daily activities, by narrowing the scope of the law, the Supreme Court has caused a catch-22. These workers have a limiting disability in the workplace that could lead to discrimination, but they are left outside the umbrella of the ADA with no protection from this potential discrimination.



BRIENNE PORTER

While many agree that carpal tunnel syndrome does not follow the normal definition of a disability, it is a work-related injury, and people should be protected from losing their jobs.

A *New York Times* editorial argued that suffering from this type of disability should not make these people unemployed. The fewer people unemployed, the

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better it is for the economy today. Those who suffer from these ailments are willing to work, but they require a job that will not aggravate their injury. This decision will make it harder for these people to fight for a job they are qualified for and able to do.

The companies need to take the initiative and work to find a reasonable situation, for both the company and the person. If it means changing their job assignment or additional training for a

new job, both parties should work to find a solution.

In a *Boston Globe* article, the president of the American Association of People With Disabilities, Andrew Imparato, said, "the ruling was one more in a recent series by the court creating more hoops for people to jump through to prove they are disabled."

This decision by the Supreme Court will cause more people who are physically or mentally disabled to be discriminated against and will make it much more difficult to prove they are disabled.

By limiting the scope of the ADA, the Supreme Court decision has caused many disabled workers to be unprotected in the workplace.

While the disability does not affect major daily tasks according to the Supreme Court decision, many people view their jobs as a major part of their lives. Congress should take the initiative to create a law that protects these workers and fills in the open spaces that were created by the ADA and the Supreme Court.

Brienne Porter is a senior political science major.