

Viewpoint

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

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Wednesday

Incumbents coming out ahead again

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — The issue of public financing of political campaigns is with us again, this time in the form of legislation to provide a taxpayer subsidy for House and Senate candidates. The legislation is backed by President Carter and impressive numbers of both Democrats and Republicans in Congress. It probably has a 50-50 chance of passage.

Nonetheless, the bills are controversial — and deservedly so. As a principle, the idea of tax-supported campaigns is simple and appealing. Once that principle is translated into legislation, tailored to meet the self-protective instincts of the incumbents who must pass it, it acquires ambiguities that must cause the most serious reservations.

Take, for example, the leading piece of

House legislation in this field: the bipartisan bill sponsored by Reps. Morris K. Udall (D-Ariz.) and John B. Anderson (R-Ill.). It would provide up to \$50,000 in federal matching money for small private contributions to major party candidates for the House and also to those independents who could raise enough "seed money" on their own to show they had significant support.

The idea of the matching grants is to make it easier for congressional candidates to finance their campaigns with small contributions, thus theoretically lessening their dependence on "special interest money."

But to make the bill palatable to the incumbents, Udall and Anderson have imposed two major restrictions that must trouble a disinterested observer of the

political process. They have eliminated primaries from the coverage of the bill. And they have imposed a spending ceiling for the general election.

As Udall readily concedes, extending the subsidy offer to congressional primaries as he and others would like to do, would doom the bill to defeat. The reason is simple: Relatively few House members are seriously challenged in the general election, but all of them dread the possibility of a primary fight within their own party.

The number of marginal (or closely contested) districts has been declining since the mid-1960s, as incumbents exploit their increasing resources to secure their seats. In 1976, only 37 of the 435 House seats were won by less than a 55-to-45 percent margin.

There is little risk for most incumbents in voting themselves and their opponents a modest subsidy of taxpayer funds for the general election campaign. But primaries are another question. At best, they tend to be nasty and divisive; at worst, they pose real peril for the veteran Washington politician who faces an ambitious young state legislator or mayor of his own party.

As further bait to their colleagues, they have written in a proviso that no candidate who accepts the public subsidy in the general election campaign would be allowed to spend more than \$150,000 on the race.

That is an interesting figure. It was not based on any measurement of the actual cost of a successful House campaign against an incumbent.

But the \$150,000 spending limit can be — and must be — measured against the almost \$1 million worth of staff salaries, office, travel and communications expenses the members of the House have voted themselves for every two-year term.

This is not to argue that the million-dollar congressman is an unnecessarily expensive luxury. It is not even to argue that the costs of his office are really a taxpayer-provided political slush fund.

But it is obvious to anyone that the million-dollar congressman gains a great campaign advantage from the publicity and services those public funds finance. For him to then vote himself and his potential opponent a \$50,000 tax subsidy for the campaign is hardly an act of generosity or altruism.

In fact, most incumbents would consider it a bargain if, for \$50,000 of tax subsidy, they could guarantee that their opponents could not spend more than \$150,000 in an effort to beat them. That is just about the best job-insurance policy any incumbent could buy.

But Udall insists that a spending limitation must be part of the public finance bill if it is to pass the House. And that raises a question of fundamental principle. It is one thing to say that incumbents have the right to set their own salaries and expense allowances. But should those same incumbents have the right to decide how much their opponents may spend against them in the next election?

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Top of the News Campus

Researchers look at energy plan

More than 200 Texas A&M University researchers are preparing written analyses of President Carter's national energy plan and its impact on Texas. Their work comes at the request of Governor Dolph Briscoe. University President Jack K. Williams said Texas A&M's variety of personnel plus its research facilities put it in a position to make a meaningful assessment of the plan.

TTI employe selected

Dr. Mark Edwards of the Texas Transportation Institute will work for a year with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in Washington, D.C. His work will deal with human factors in avoiding accidents and conserving energy. Edwards has been with the institute since 1969.

Texas

Putting religion into college

Laughing and shouting House members tentatively approved a bill yesterday requiring college students to take a course in religion before they could receive bachelor degrees. "It's time to get religion back into our colleges," said Rep. Brad Wright, R-Houston. "This is where we determine who is a good Christian or Jew and who's not." The religion clause was added to a bill requiring college students to take six hours in free market economics. The bill requires one more House vote before going to the Senate.

Egg farm may hatch suit

A district attorney in Lubbock may sue a local egg farm which has become a breeding ground for swarms of pesky flies with a taste for human flesh. The flies are reported to have attacked farm hands, tractor drivers and picnickers. The attorney, Alton Griffin said he would force the owner of the egg farm to comply with a law prohibiting excessive fly-breeding.

Judge has new neighbors

Texas legislators unhappy with U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice's order to establish halfway houses for juvenile delinquents voted yesterday to place one of the houses on a lot next to the judge's home in Tyler. The bill's sponsor, Rep. Emmett Whitehead, D-Rusk, said it will give the judge "fair and equal treatment to what he has dishied out to the hard-working, God-fearing people of this state." The judge made the order following a suit in 1973. Whitehead sponsored a similar bill in 1975 which passed the House, but died in the Senate.

"Ten dumbest" also ten angriest

House members singled out as "the 10 Dumbest" in an informal poll criticized the capitol press corps in speeches last night. Some suggested the reporters involved in the articles should be expelled from the House. "Somebody must take a stand against journalism that is unfit for Mr. Peepers bookstore," said Rep. Clay Smothers, D-Dallas, one of those ridiculed in the poll. "We cannot continue to sit idly by while the leadership of this House is also called slime." Speaker Bill Clayton said the matter would be taken to the House Administration Committee.

Nation

Longet's term over, troubles not

Claudine Longet will end her one month jail term at 8 tonight for the slaying of her lover. But her legal problems concerning last year's shooting may not be over. The parents of pro skier Vladimir "Spider" Sabich filed a \$1.3 million damage suit in Denver against the French-born singer Monday. They allege the shooting of their son was with "malice, insult and a wanton and reckless disregard of his rights." Longet was convicted in January of a misdemeanor homicide charge in the case.

Was scandal witness silenced?

A potential witness in the alleged South Korean bribery scandal in Congress was found murdered two days after he was asked to testify, a member of the House Ethics Committee said yesterday. The congressman, asking not to be identified, said it "would be only circumstantial" to suggest Alexi Goodarzi, 36, was slain to prevent his testimony. But, he said, Goodarzi was "very afraid" to go before the committee. Goodarzi, a worker in the Rotunda restaurant on Capitol Hill, was found dead Thursday. He was shot twice in the head.

Sixers take Rockets, 112-109

The Philadelphia 76ers staged off a final minute rally by the Houston Rockets to enter the NBA championship series by beating the Rockets 112-109 last night. Julius Erving led the Sixers with 34 points. The best of seven championship series with the Portland Trail Blazers begins Sunday in Philadelphia.

"Fuzz busters" may get busted

A bill outlawing devices which can detect radar used by police enforcing speed limits was delayed in a Louisiana Senate committee yesterday. Lt. Kenny Wagner of the state police wants to fine merchants selling "fuzz busters" and to confiscate the units when found in private cars. The units can detect microwave radio signals emitted from police radar and warn drivers of a speed trap. But an assistant executive counsel said the "fuzz busters" serve other purposes besides evading speed laws. The counsel, Mike Baer, said he owns a unit and can detect a police radar two miles away, but claims "I just want to know where the police are in case I need one."

The Battalion

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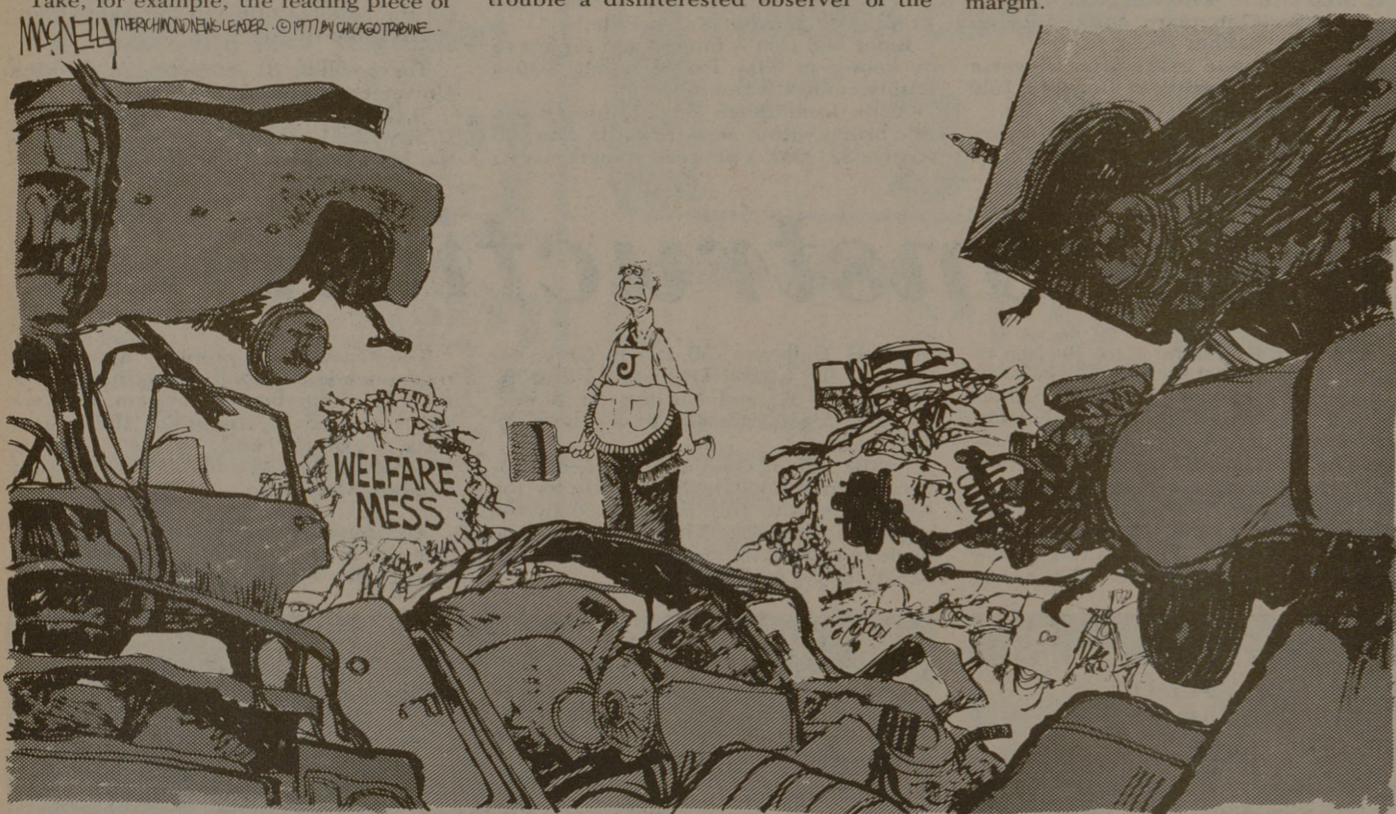
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Lindbergh memories not so memorable

By DICK WEST

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Memories of Lindbergh:

I was in knee pants when Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic 50 years ago this week. That is about all I can remember about it.

Later, when Lindbergh was in Texas on

The lighter side

a cross-country tour, he was said to have flown right over Merkel, my home town. I do not know whether that was true.

The people in Merkel liked to identify themselves with big events and may simply have assumed something that didn't happen.

I do know that Lindbergh landed at

Abilene, 17 miles down the road. My father took me over to see him.

As we were nearing the airport, there was a plane circling around and I told my father I'll bet that's him. My father said no, Lindbergh wasn't due yet and anyone who could fly nonstop from New York to Paris could surely get to Abilene at the right time.

In the paper the next day it said that Lindbergh had indeed arrived early and had spent some time circling over the city. So much for parental infallibility.

Lindbergh appeared on a platform with the mayor of Abilene. I do not remember how he looked. I don't remember how the mayor looked either. I don't even remember how I looked.

The only thing I remember is that the mayor gave Lindbergh the key to the city. That impressed me, for I was under the

impression that the key would open any door in Abilene and that Lindbergh could just walk in and take anything he wanted.

But my father said the key wouldn't really open anything. He said it was merely symbolic.

At that age I was very literal-minded and had trouble understanding symbolism. I still do. Which may be why I have trouble understanding the Carter administration.

That same summer my father took me to an air show in Sweetwater and we both "went up" for the first time in our lives. We flew in a Ryan, which was the type of plane that Lindbergh flew.

I remember the other passengers exclaiming that we were up so high the cars down below looked like ants. I thought they looked like little cars. My literal-mindedness again.

My sister's boy friend also treated me to a plane ride but it was in a different type of plane.

The biggest Lindbergh buff in Merkel was Warren Higgins, who ran a blacksmith shop. There were a lot of Higginses around Merkel. Charlie "Chock" Higgins ran a garage and several others had farms out near Stith.

Inspired by his hero, Warren Higgins started building his own airplane in the back of the blacksmith shop. I do not know whether he ever finished it.

Someone once told me that he stopped work on it when he discovered it would be too big to taxi through the door. But that may have been only a variation of the old boat-in-the-basement joke.

Anyway, Lindbergh had a major impact on my life. I just wish I could remember more about him.

Letters to the editor

Income should set foreign student's bill

Editor:

I'm a foreign student in the Graduate School at Texas A&M and have been reading about the Moore Bill and his clan (Bill 856 and Bill 2162). If it is the purpose of these Bills to eliminate international students from attending public universities in Texas, then the sponsors of this legislation should not take the cowardly way out and beat around the bush but should come right out and say so. However, if they are trying to equate the international students' tuition with out-of-state student fees, they may have a point. Although students from other states come here by choice, as they no doubt have equal or better schools in their own home states, they are prepared to pay out-of-state tuition just as students from Texas do when they attend out-of-state universities. On the other hand, most students from other nations come here to get a better education than what they could get in their own country, particularly at the graduate level. As for paying \$40 per semester hour, this is still a bargain when you compare it to fees in other state universities.

The people in Austin should attempt to classify the international students according to their source of income. For example, students on government scholarships (his own or U.S. Government) should pay the \$40 since it's not costing the student anything and those that are paying their own expenses must provide a financial statement that is verified by their government to indicate their ability to pay. Those that can afford it should be treated as out-of-state students and those who can barely afford the essentials should be allowed to pay the minimum (\$14 per semester). This practice is followed by at least one university that I know. I strongly believe that if a family can afford to send their children, especially undergraduates, abroad, they are in a position to pay the tuition bills, after all "if you want to dance pay the fiddler."

— M. E. Scandarani

Students do care

Editor:

I take exception to the article written by Mr. Paul Arnett in the Wednesday, May 11, 1977, *Battalion*. The article, entitled "Kashmere duo still waiting," stated that the "NCAA, coaches and fans of Aggieland are more interested in the fate of a sport than they are in the fate of two men."

I suggest that had Mr. Arnett taken the time to establish a factual basis for his article, he would not have included the TAMU coaches and fans in the above allegation. To the contrary, I believe he

would have noted, as I have noted, a very deep concern by a substantial majority of the fans and all of the coaches.

I agree that the Southwest Conference (SWC) and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) appeared to show little concern for the individual rights of Godine and Williams, and I agree that many Aggie fans believed that Godine, Williams and the University were the target of politically motivated accusations. However, I strongly resent the implications that we lacked concern for the two athletes involved. I further believe Mr. Arnett owes us all an apology. Further I

suggest that in the future if he can not stick to factual reporting that he confine his personal opinions to the editorial section where they more appropriately belong.

—Bob Garrett

Editor's note: As sports editor of *The Battalion* for the last year Paul Arnett has had time to draw his own conclusions on the response of Aggie fans to the Godine-Williams affair. He presented those conclusions as his own opinion in an opinion column. That's why it was not on the editorial page.

