

Speed limit sanctions hurt Western states

Federal sanctions to enforce the 55 mph speed limit discriminate against Western states, especially Texas, says a Texas A&M University researcher.

The law assumes that compliance can be achieved through law enforcement and that every state has equal opportunity and capability to convince most drivers to obey the 55 mph limit. Neither assumption appears valid, said Dr. Quinn Brackett of the Texas Transportation Institute.

Brackett said his research indicates that states with high quality highway systems — designed and built to deliver goods and people at higher speeds — also have fewer highway patrolmen per mile, making enforcement more difficult.

States that do not comply with the 55 mph federally set percentages are penalized by losing federal highway

funds. States that comply, determined by quarterly speed sampling, are to receive bonus funds if Congress appropriates the money, Brackett said.

"Western states have more room for a driver to open up," the TTI Human Factors Divisions researcher said. "In the East, population density and traffic volume limits traffic and hold speed down."

He pointed out that weather is also a factor.

"This all comes into play when speed measures are taken," Brackett said. "Traffic speeds in Maine in the quarter ending in December are going to be fairly slow, because of 8-foot snowdrifts blocking the highway."

He said the historical precedent may be the most significant factor however. "Some states have always had less than 70 mph speed limits,

simply because their highways were not ever good enough to handle higher speed traffic. To make the adjustment from 60 to 55 mph is no major problem. It's a different matter where the change was from 70 to 55 mph."

Student finds grand prize egg

By SUSAN HOPKINS
Campus Reporter

A \$60 diamond was awarded to a Texas A&M University senior management major last week for finding the grand prize egg in the MSC Recreation Committee's Easter egg hunt.

Jimmy Crawford, the committee's special projects chairman, said 250 plastic Easter eggs were hidden on the main campus last week. Each egg contained a message telling the finder of the egg that he had won a prize, and that

he should find out what it was at the Student Programs Office.

Marianne Woods, who found the grand prize egg in front of the System Administration Building, won a diamond and a setting from Diamond Brokers International, Inc. It will be put in her Aggie senior ring, she said.

Crawford said clues were given in The Battalion last week as to where the grand prize egg was hidden. He said the egg was found before the third clue was out Thursday.

About 25 people were searching in front of the System Administration Building late Thursday night, Crawford said. He said one student climbed a flag pole with a flashlight in hand, and another student used a ladder to search for the grand prize egg.

Woods said she was at the building Thursday morning to deliver something, and decided to look for the egg before returning home. She said she was on the porch of the building when she glanced down and saw the green

plastic grand prize egg.

Other prizes included hair cuts, dinners, ice cream and gift certificates, donated by merchants in the Bryan-College Station area.

However, he said, a few prizes, including the diamond, were bought by the committee.

The egg hunt was sponsored by the MSC Recreation Committee to promote spirit and participation among the students, Crawford said.

Primary sign-up ended, others open

By LAURA CORTEZ
City Staff

The deadline for voter registration for the May 3 primary was Friday, but it is not too late to become eligible to vote in the runoff election June 7 or in the November 4 general election.

County Tax Assessor-Collector Gerald "Buddy" Winn said voters have until May 8 to register to vote in the runoff election, if there is one, and until October 5 to vote in the general election.

Winn said there are about 28,500 registered voters in Brazos County; 3,150 have registered since the last part of January. Out of these, Winn estimated that about 80 percent were on the "strike list."

He said the strike list consists of about 7,700 people who had been registered to vote, but moved and

did not notify the tax office of an address change. Winn said approximately 80 percent of the strike list consists of students.

He said if a person does not notify the tax office of an address change, his registration card is returned to the tax office. The voter must then re-register.

But Winn said if the voter fails to re-register, he can still vote in the June run-off election by showing up at the polling place and informing the registrar in charge that he is on the strike list. He said the strike list is thrown out June 30, however, so this would not work for the general election.

Winn said that once a person is registered, his registration is automatically renewed each election year.

Carter asked to move inmate

AUSTIN — The head of a criminal justice reform group asked President Jimmy Carter Monday to transfer inmate David Ruiz from a federal penitentiary in Indiana to one near Austin, his family's hometown.

Ruiz, the lead plaintiff in a suit challenging operations of the Texas Department of Corrections, was transferred to federal custody and placed in the Federal Correctional Institute in Terre Haute, Ind. He is serving 25 years for armed robbery.

Charles Sullivan, executive director of Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, told Carter in a letter Ruiz has twice been denied parole based on incorrect information, the last time March 27 by Texas Gov. Bill Clements.

Sullivan contends if Ruiz had been in Texas for a face-to-face meeting

with representatives of the Board of Pardons and Paroles, he could have corrected the wrong information in his file.

Sullivan did not say what the information was.

The Pardons and Paroles Board recommended Ruiz be paroled, but Clements vetoed the proposal and suggested he may begin an investigation to determine if parole procedures need to be revised.

Sullivan said the federal Bureau of Prisons ordinarily attempts to assign an inmate to an institution near his home.

"By being at Bastrop, most of David's 12 brothers and sisters and their families who reside in Austin would have only a few miles to travel for a visit," he said in his letter to Carter.



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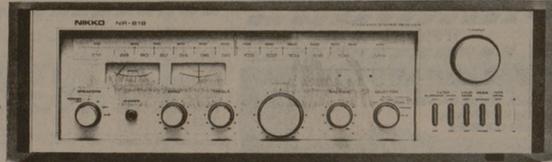
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