

Opinion

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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

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Why just English?

The State Republican Executive Committee's proposed constitutional amendment proclaiming English as the official language of Texas is a superfluous attempt to state the obvious.

The last thing the amendment-laden Texas Constitution needs is another highly specialized, meaningless provision tacked on to it. The last thing Texas taxpayers need is the expense of funding the amendment process one more time.

But what would declaring English the official state language accomplish? It makes about as much sense as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution declaring apple pie the official national dessert.

We could, of course, use the amendment to revert to the pre-bilingual education days when students were forbidden to speak anything other than English on school grounds.

The amendment also could be used to prevent voting ballots and official documents from being printed in both English and Spanish.

All of these ramifications of the proposed amendment amount to little more than discrimination against non-English-speaking Americans — specifically Hispanics.

So English would be our official language. Big deal. A quick flip through the encyclopedia reveals essentially the same thing without going through the amendment process.

The proposal is the epitome of bureaucratic pomp without purpose. The amendment, if actually submitted, wouldn't be worth the paper it was printed on, even if the self-appointed guardians of English attempted to save money by having it printed in only one language.

Puff, the tragic drag

The dangers of cigarette smoking are no secret — lung cancer, mouth cancer, pharynx cancer, esophagus cancer, bladder cancer, pancreas cancer, laryngeal cancer, emphysema and ultimately death all have been linked to it.

Scare tactics and statistics have little effect on diehard smoking addicts. The lure of a nicotine-tainted puff outweighs the threat of a slow and painful death.

Overcoming an addiction is never easy. ACS says that if one in five smokers kick the habit during the smokeout, the project will be a success. The first step, of course, is trying to quit.

If you smoke, please try puffing clean air Thursday. If you're lucky, you might develop an addiction for it rather than tar and nicotine.

TEXAS ECONOMIC GUIDE. Includes panels: BIG BEND, THE PANHANDLE, HILL COUNTRY, THE VALLEY, EMPLOYMENT, and MARGULIES.



'Regan's Rangers' attacking diplomacy with military zeal



Richard Cohen

Every time Soviet radio switches to classical music and a new leader is installed in the Kremlin, the op-ed pages of U.S. newspapers sprout with essays by Soviet specialists wondering if the new boy will be able to control the military.

Without indulging ourselves in Beethoven or anything, the time has come for us to ask the same question about our leader, Ronald Reagan. Can he control the military?

The answer seems to be no. His National Security Council seems to be an outpost of the military, headed by an admiral, John Poindexter, who succeeded a colonel, Robert McFarlane. Next in charge when it comes to deriding-do is a lieutenant colonel, Oliver North, Jr., who is the Errol Flynn of the operation, and above them all is that ex-Marine by way of Merrill Lynch, Donald Regan.

What they all lack in foreign policy experience, they make up in chutzpah. Show them a foreign policy dilemma and they'll mistake it for a beach.

The most recent beach hit is, of course, Iran. In contravention of U.S. policy, Regan's Rangers proved that (1) we would bargain for the release of American hostages and (2) we are not neutral in the Iran-Iraq war.

process, putting in peril all Americans who happen to be in the Middle East.

As for U.S. credibility, it just no longer exists. What we vowed we would not do, we simply did.

Ronald Reagan himself always has had a weakness for the simple, the cinematic. He likes the bold stroke. He sees the world with a kind of charming simplicity and in this he has been indulged.

The Iran operation is a case in point. It promised results, it was bold, it was secret and — maybe best of all — if it worked it would bring home the hostages just before the congressional elections.

But what now? The credibility of the United States is in shreds. As with the Daniloff affair, we said we would not bargain — and then we did. Throughout the Middle East, terrorists now know the unit price of an American. He or she is worth a shipload of tank and artillery ammunition, some rifles, a cake in the shape of a key and a Bible.

As in Watergate, a president has established an entire apparatus to do his personal bidding. The normal agencies for the promulgation and execution of foreign policy have been bypassed.

Col. North and a former National Security director, McFarlane, were dis-

patched on secret missions that were as silly as they were exciting. After all, the operator relied on the willingness of the factions in Iran to keep mum. Dictator, one did not.

It hardly takes a conspiracy theorist to suggest that Regan's Rangers are also responsible for keeping the Contras in Nicaragua armed in the manner which they had become accustomed to. Congress had ordered otherwise, so this, they turned to a network of former military men of commendable communist zeal to do what the government could not.

All of Congress is now in the hands of Democrats, including the Senate. On the talk shows, its leaders issued the required growls, asserting that they look into this or that. By January, Congress convenes, there will undoubtedly be new polls certifying the president's popularity and, if the past is any guide, the Democrats will turn their attention to trade and the public hangover of drug dealers.

But it should not be. The likelihood that Regan's Rangers did not limit themselves to Nicaragua or Iran, but that their activities have been as boundless as their imagination — and more illegal to boot.

If, as Regan's Rangers seem to be, the real life is like a movie, Congress ought to respond in kind. I suggest "All President's Men."

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Mail Call

What about the child?

EDITOR:

I reacted strongly when I read Paul Koch's letter in Friday's Battalion. Although AIDS is stigmatized as being "the gay plague," the virus is now known to be carried by more than two million people, homosexual as well as heterosexual.

I was struck by the phrase "almost every case was so easily preventable." The key word there is "almost." As most people know, AIDS can be passed by blood transfusions as well as sexual contact.

I am happy to see my tax money used to combat such a terrifying virus as AIDS and any other life-threatening disease.

John P. Davis '89

'Innocents' also at risk

EDITOR:

I cannot believe the naivete and misperception expressed in Paul Koch's letter in Friday's Battalion. Koch said that he could not feel sympathetic toward AIDS victims because they "play with fire" and deserve to "get burned."

Well, what about the woman on the CBS News special, "AIDS Hits Home," who always had been faithful to her husband, yet she contracted AIDS because he was having an affair with another man?

These people cannot make any behavioral decisions to reduce their risk. They are innocent. Can we just stand around and watch them die simply because the moralists of the world feel that AIDS is Mother Nature's revenge against homosexuality and promiscuity?

The AIDS epidemic confronts us with our own sexual insecurities and vulnerabilities, and we must each deal with that in our own way. But our humanity alone must make care and love our first priorities.

Vanessa Pauley '89

Where does the money go?

EDITOR:

Over the past three years I have trusted the Memorial Student Center Bookstore as a good cause and assumed that one had better prices. But this semester I was gravely disappointed.

Where does our money go? I want to know how the MSC "distributes" its money. It claims to be nonprofit, so would seem it must produce a huge amount of funds.

However, as student organization treasurers painfully have discovered, the percent of money distributed that is needed by organizations this year is way down, around 10 to 15 percent of full budget.

I hope someone at the MSC takes a look at this situation and gives us some answers.

Paul Svacina '87

Editor's Note: Bookstore Manager Howard DeHart says, except for operating costs, all money from the bookstore is channeled back to student organizations.

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent.