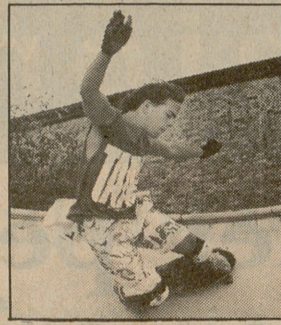


The Battalion

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At Ease

A&M
Counterculture

Local voters to decide pari-mutuel issue on election ballot

By Juliette Rizzo
Staff Writer

Voters in Bryan-College Station will vote on the races November 8.

A referendum on the November ballot will permit voters to approve legal pari-mutuel betting on horse racing in Brazos County. If approved, the referendum will signify the final stretch of horse racing legislation locally.

In 1824, betting on horse racing was first mentioned as a state-wide issue by Stephen F. Austin, who wrote a penal code to outlaw every form of gambling in the state. Horse racing, though, always has been legal.

In the early 1900s, Texas operated under the "bookie system" of betting. By 1933, pari-mutuel betting made its way to Texas from Paris and did away with the bookie. This form of betting was legalized by the Texas Legislature for a brief time to help the struggling Texas economy. Once again, in 1937, the pari-mutuel issue was scrutinized by the legislature and declared illegal in a special session by Gov. James Alfred, who was morally opposed.

In an effort to revive horse wagering, Gov. Mark White in 1986 allowed a bill to become law stating that Texans be allowed a deciding vote on pari-mutuel betting at the state and county levels.

In November 1987, the issue was approved at the state level and at the local level in 56 Texas counties, leaving the local approval for 1988.

According to the state Comptroller's

office, delays in the start of pari-mutuel racing have cost the state \$25 million in anticipated tax revenue, which was supposed to stabilize the state budget.

Ken Campbell, information director for the Texas Horse Racing Association, said the approval of the referendum will legalize local county options for citizens to bet on horse racing.

"What the approval of the referendum really will decide is whether the local community will allow the option to further economic opportunity," he said.

Nancy Fisher, Deputy Secretary of the State Racing Commission, said the approval of the referendum locally will enable any citizen to apply for a racetrack in or around the community.

"The option of having a racetrack may bring much needed revenue into many parts of the state, including Brazos County," she said. "The horse racing industry will have a 'ripple effect' on the economy. Money and people will be brought into the state and local businesses may benefit. The cost of having a racetrack in any particular area would be defrayed by the admission fees charged to get into the track."

Since the withering Texas economy is recovering from the slump brought on by the decline of the oil industry, pari-mutuel betting on horse racing may help the state to get back on its feet.

Pari-mutuel literally means "mutual wager." In pari-mutuel betting, a take out structure is used to determine how the money brought in will be distributed.

Texas has an 18 percent take out.

Campbell said for every dollar wagered, five percent goes to the state, another five percent goes to purses used to benefit the agricultural industry, farmers and horse breeders. The remaining eight percent is given to the track "so they can afford to put on such shows."

"With pari-mutuel wagering," he said, "100 percent of the money taken in is given out. The person betting does not lose to the track but to the person sitting next to him in the grandstand. The track itself just provides the racing and the computer systems to monitor the bets."

"Pari-mutuel horse racing is the most highly regulated and most successfully regulated sport in the world. It is a game of skill not of chance."

In 1985, a study done by the Department of Agriculture estimated the potential impact of horse racing on the Texas economy. After the legalization, the number of breeding horse farms in Texas increased from 13 to 265. The Texas Department of Agriculture estimates that 10,981 jobs may be created in the state.

Fisher said if approved, Brazos County would be a prime target for horse farms.

Campbell said he thinks there is a strong possibility that the referendum will pass in Brazos County.

Brazos County always has been a strong supporter of the horse industry, and will be even stronger if people realize the economic benefits surrounding racetracks, he said. Approximately 500

jobs could be created including construction jobs, veterinary practices and jobs involving supplying crops.

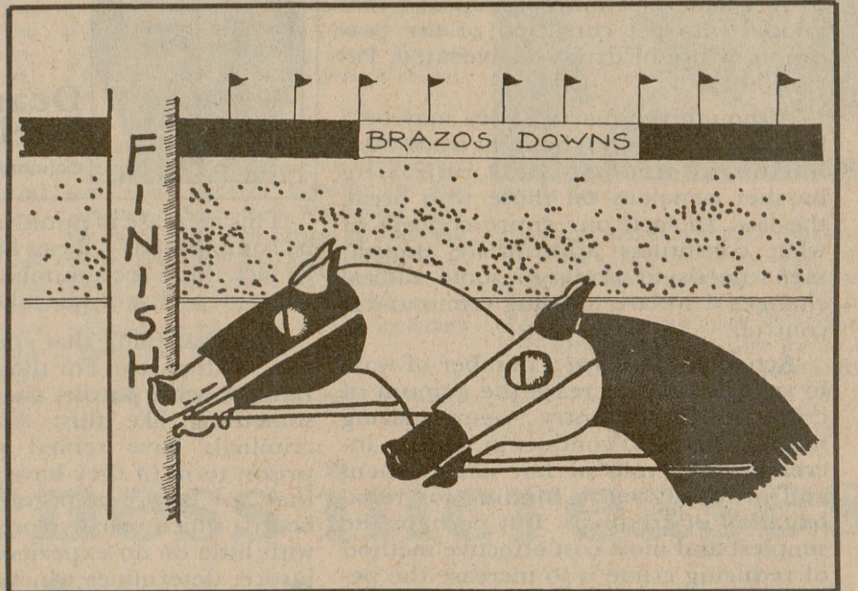
Racing is structured so that the class of a racetrack denotes the number of horse and greyhound racing days in the state. The Texas Racing Commission can license three types of racetracks. Class 1 tracks, three of which which are scheduled to be built in areas near Dallas, San Antonio and Houston, will have 44 or more racing days per year.

Class 2 tracks, like the one that could be built in Brazos County, can hold up to 44 racing days. Class 3 tracks, which are also a possibility in the area, are classified as "county fair" tracks and can hold races up to 16 days.

If the referendum is approved, citizens in Brazos County could apply for a Class 2 or Class 3 track through an application process. The TRC says a race-track license applicant would have to be a United States citizen and a 10-year resident of Texas. If the applicant were a corporation, it would have to be incorporated in Texas and over 50 percent of its stock would have to be owned by Texans. The State Racing Commission will start approving applications for racetracks as early as November.

If the referendum is rejected by voters, it won't be voted on again for five years.

LaDonna Hudson, director and sales director of the Thoroughbred Horseman's Association of Texas, Inc., said people need to be educated to the fact that if the referendum does pass, it does



Graphic by Kelley Morgan

not mean a racetrack will be built.

"The passage will simply open the door for development of the horse industry in the area," she said. "Since the county needs to move forward, it must think in terms of diversification and the horse racing industry is an industry that can bring in revenue. It is a business; an

entertainment business just like a movie.

"It would be nice to have the option to build a Class 2 or Class 3 track. Individuals need to realize that just because it would be a pari-mutuel track does not mean everyone has to bet. Betting is a personal decision."

State may lose food stamp funds

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Department of Human Services has filed a lawsuit to fight the possible loss of more than \$500,000 in funding for the food stamp program.

The state faces the loss because of the loss of food stamps by two U.S. Postal Service workers and the loss of other

stamps amounting to \$262,035, officials say.

Authorities say two postal workers stole more than \$140,000 worth of food stamps. Another \$120,000 in stamps was unaccounted for in the mail.

Texas Department of Human Services, which administers the joint federal-state

program, filed suit recently in U.S. District Court in Austin.

The state owes \$262,035 in lost food stamps, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture says it intends to cut funding next year by that much, according to court documents.

Since Texas matches those funds, the

Human Services Department stands to lose \$524,070. The amount of food stamps available would not be affected, but jobs connected with the program would be, a state official said. The Legislature would have to approve money to replace the lost federal funds.

"If the Texas Department of Human Services is required to pay the claim of \$262,035, it would have to be paid from state funds appropriated for the administration of the food stamp program," said Randy Washington, associate commissioner in charge of the department's income assistance programs.

"I don't know where we would find those state funds," Washington said. "Obviously, we do not plan to pay the penalty, and we do not think it's an appropriate penalty. That's why we're in litigation."

"Our opinion is we really don't control what happens in the mail, and therefore, the state should not be liable for those losses," Washington said.

The federal tolerance for losses of food stamps in the mail is set by law, said Judy Snow, public affairs director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's office in Dallas. She said the tolerance level equals 0.5 percent of the amount received.

"So, regardless of the particulars of how it's lost, that does not enter into it," Snow said.

Friends, relatives of missing student up search efforts

GALVESTON (AP) — Friends and family of a missing Texas A&M University-Galveston student are stepping up efforts to locate the woman who apparently was abducted from her hotel job more than five days ago.

Suzanne Rene Richerson disappeared Friday evening from her job as night auditor at the Casa del Mar Condominium-Hotel. Her purse, school books and the borrowed car she drove to her night job were undisturbed, as was the hotel's cash register.

Scuff marks that might have been made during a struggle were found on the hotel front desk and a shoe that may have belonged to Richerson was found just outside the small lobby.

Authorities say they have no leads, but 200 of Richerson's fellow students have begun searching for them, fanning out through the city with posters offering a reward for helping to locate her.

The poster campaign was the first of many steps that will be taken in the next few days to try to locate Richerson, said her father, Clyde Richerson.

"Friday, Saturday and Sunday were just hell," he said. "Now we're kind of regrouped and we know what needs to be done. We want to keep this with as high visibility as we can."

Clyde and Kathy Richerson of Florence, near Killeen, waited all day Tuesday near the telephone at their daughter's apartment in one of Galveston's restored Victorian homes.

A&M-Galveston officials already have received pledges of \$15,000 for a reward fund and a campaign to make the public aware of the case, said Bill Kern, vice president for student services. Casa del Mar put up \$5,000 of the reward fund, he said.

A&M-Galveston President William Merrell said, "We don't intend to let it rest. We won't forget about it until we find out what happened."

Galveston police investigator Harry Millo said detectives had no solid leads on Richerson's disappearance, but are working to contact people from out of state who were staying at the hotel.

A&M system solicits joint research funds

By Scot Walker

Staff Writer

Texas A&M University System and the University System of South Texas have asked the Texas Legislature for \$12 million to support joint research as part of a continuing collaboration and merger feasibility study.

Proposals were submitted as part of each school's request for legislative appropriations for 1990-91.

A&M System requests for joint projects totaling more than \$6.8 million. USST, comprising Texas A&I University, Corpus Christi State University and Laredo State University asked for more than \$5.5 million.

Officials of the two state-supported higher-education systems have been meeting since July to explore possibilities for more intensified cooperation or a formal merger.

A joint task force had planned to formalize the cooperative study and present an analysis to the governing bodies of the two institutions by Oct. 31. A&M System Chancellor Perry L. Adkisson said that an Oct. 1 deadline for legislative budget requests prompted officials to move more quickly to seek funds that could be used productively in cooperative programs regardless of the ultimate decision about a formal merger.

"We elected to make these funding requests now in order to be considered during the legislative session beginning in January," Adkisson said. "We see opportunities to move forward immediately in several areas that could be mutually beneficial to institutions within our two systems and the students and areas they serve."

However, W.C. Lancaster, vice chancellor for budgets and human resources at A&M, said that the primary benefit of a merger or cooperative studies would be to USST and South Texas.

"The Legislature asked us (the A&M System and the University of Texas System) to aid the institutions of South Texas in addressing the inequities in higher education in that region," Lancaster said. "The University of Texas is working with Pan American University in capacities similar to how we are working with USST."

Lancaster said that the System has been involved in cooperative studies with other universities before, including a current joint effort between the Texas Engineering Extension Service and the

University of Texas at Arlington.

Of the South Texas program initiatives, the largest A&M request was for \$1.6 million for the construction and implementation of the South Texas Telecommunications Network to link USST schools with the A&M System. USST's appropriations request for the project was \$1.3 million.

The requests also cover funding for 16 other projects, including research into minority educational opportunities in medicine and veterinary medicine, enhancing agricultural opportunities for minorities and women, community education in agriculture and nutrition and research in bilingual science and technology.

EPA to permit use of low-risk pesticides

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency said Wednesday it will permit the use of cancer-causing pesticides whose residues on foods are increased during processing if the risk of cancer is negligible.

The agency so far has interpreted the so-called "Delaney clause," which bars cancer-causing food additives, as requiring it to refuse new pesticide licenses for such chemicals.

The reversal of policy is in line with one of the recommendations of a

National Academy of Sciences panel last year.

Jack Moore, EPA's deputy administrator, said the change clears the way for decisions on 73 old pesticides, licensed when standards were looser and for which there is some evidence of cancer-causing power.

It also may permit the licensing of weakly carcinogenic new chemicals, which might be safer than current compounds.

At least a dozen chemicals are known to be in the second group.



Photo by Dean Saito

A little off the top

Clay Williams, a senior animal science major from Austin, cuts logs at Duncan Field Wednesday in preparation for the building of bonfire.