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Collegiate license plates show spirit, fund scholarships

By Michael Kelley

Of The Battalion Staff

Starting in January students and fans of Texas A&M will not only be able to show their Aggie spirit through a myriad of bumper stickers and 'Aggie on Board' car signs, but they will also be able to travel in style with their very own Aggie collegiate license plates.

Collegiate license plates, which are projected to produce \$200,000 in scholarships for A&M next year, are a product of the hard work and dedication of The Legislative Study Group.

The LSG is a Student Government organization that provides information to state legislators about A&M student opinions on key state issues.

The leader of the struggle to create the license plates was Ty Clevenger, Speaker of

the Student Senate and a former LSG member.

"The collegiate license plates will be sold by the State Highway Department," Clevenger said. "The majority of the revenue will create a substantial contribution for scholarship funds at Texas A&M, as well as to other state institutions of higher education."

Collegiate license plates will give Texas drivers the choice of buying plates with the seal of any Texas institution of higher education on them. The collegiate plates will cost \$30 more than the regular or personalized plates presently being sold by the Highway Department. Of that extra \$30, \$25 will go directly to the scholarship fund of the college or university whose seal is on the plates purchased.

"Not all Aggies can buy personalized license plates with 'GIG EM' or 'AGGIE' on them," said Clevenger. "With the new colle-

giate plates, everyone can have Texas A&M on their license plates."

The idea for the collegiate license plates started with Dr. Patricia Hurley, an A&M

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political science professor. Clevenger was in Hurley's class when she was discussing possible solutions for solving the problem of a lack of funding for higher education in Texas.

The State of Florida had successfully used collegiate license plates. Evidence showed that it could work in Texas, too. Clevenger used the Florida case to take Hurley's idea to Austin and present it to the state legislature.

LSG got a green light from the Student Senate to take the legislation to Austin. The group then followed Clevenger's initiative and mapped out a strategy they felt would make the idea not only a bill, but a reality.

Of the several bills LSG supported, the Collegiate License Plate Bill would later prove to be "one of the few tangible successes LSG had in the state legislature."

Clevenger first talked to his state representative, Jerry Yost, R-Longview, about the idea. Yost agreed to sponsor such a bill, but it was Bob Richardson, R-Austin, who actually presented the legislation upon the floor of the House.

"Traditionally most bills proposing to

change the format of Texas license plates have never been let out of committee," Clevenger said. "Therefore we went to each individual committee member of the House Transportation Committee to inform them that the bill would raise almost \$2 million annually in scholarships for needy students, as well as netting \$150,000 for the state."

"After hearing this information, most committee members became receptive to our proposal."

After passing in the House, the bill produced a turf battle in the Senate.

"Most senators wanted credit for the bill because it would raise revenue for an important group of constituents — students — while not raising taxes," Clevenger said. "It was a relatively noncontroversial bill and went immediately to Gov. Clement's desk, where he signed it into law this past summer."

PUBLIC NOTICE BRIEF EXPLANATORY STATEMENTS OF PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS SPECIAL ELECTION NOVEMBER 7, 1989

PROPOSITION NO. 1 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 102 proposes a constitutional amendment that would increase the salary of members of the legislature to one-fourth of the Governor's salary and increase the salary of the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to one-half of the Governor's salary. The annual salary of members of the legislature, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives is currently \$7,200. Under this provision, the annual salary of the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker would be \$46,716, and the annual salary of members of the legislature would be \$23,358, based on the Governor's current annual salary of \$93,432. The increase for the Speaker and the members of the legislature would take effect when the legislature convenes for its regular session in January 1991. The increase for the Lieutenant Governor would take effect when the term of that office begins in 1991. The salary increase for the Lieutenant Governor would not make members of the legislature ineligible to run for the office of Lieutenant Governor.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to limit the salary of the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house of representatives to not more than one-half of the governor's salary and to limit the salary of a member of the legislature to not more than one-fourth of the governor's salary."

PROPOSITION NO. 2 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 5 proposes a constitutional amendment that would authorize the Texas Water Development Board to issue an additional \$500 million of Texas water development bonds. The additional bonds are to be used as follows: \$250 million of the bonds are to be used for water supply loans and facilities acquisition; \$200 million of the bonds are to be used for water quality enhancement projects; and \$50 million of the bonds are to be used for flood control. The legislature may provide that \$100 million be used for subsidized loans and grants to economically distressed areas of the state for water and wastewater facilities.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to authorize the issuance of an additional \$500 million of Texas water development bonds for water supply, water quality, and flood control purposes."

PROPOSITION NO. 3 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 51 proposes a constitutional amendment that would authorize the legislature to provide for the issuance of general obligation bonds to provide money to establish a Texas agricultural fund, a rural microenterprise development fund, a Texas product development fund, and a Texas small business incubator fund in the state treasury. The Texas agricultural fund would be used to provide financial assistance to develop, increase, improve, or expand the production, processing, marketing, or export of crops or products grown or produced in Texas by Texas agricultural businesses. The rural microenterprise development fund would be used to stimulate the creation and expansion of small businesses in rural areas. The Texas product development fund would be used to aid in the development and production of new or improved products in this state. The Texas small business incubator fund would be used to stimulate the development of small businesses in the State.

The principal amount of bonds outstanding at one time could not exceed \$25 million for the Texas agricultural fund and \$5 million for the rural microenterprise develop-

ment fund. The financial assistance offered by both funds could include loan guarantees, insurance, co-insurance, loans, and indirect loans or purchases or acceptances of assignments of loans or other obligations. To carry out the Texas product development fund, the legislature could authorize loans, loan guarantees, and equity investments, and the issuance of up to \$25 million of general obligation bonds for initial funding. To carry out the Texas small business incubator fund, the legislature could authorize loans and grants of money, and the issuance of up to \$20 million of general obligation bonds for initial funding.

Bonds authorized under this amendment would be paid out of the first money coming into the treasury in each fiscal year that is not otherwise appropriated by the constitution, less any amount in any interest and sinking account at the end of the preceding fiscal year that is pledged to payment of the bonds or interest.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for the recovery and further development of the state's economy, with goals of increasing job opportunities and other benefits for Texas residents, through state financing of the development and production of Texas products and businesses."

PROPOSITION NO. 4 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 13 proposes a constitutional amendment that would authorize the legislature, by general law, to exempt from ad valorem taxes property owned by nonprofit veterans organizations that are chartered or incorporated by the United States Congress.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to exempt property of nonprofit veterans organizations from ad valorem taxation."

PROPOSITION NO. 5 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 11 proposes a constitutional amendment that would provide an exemption from ad valorem taxation for goods, wares, merchandise, other tangible personal property (including aircraft), and ores (other than oil, gas, and petroleum products) if the property is acquired in or imported into the state and is destined to be forwarded out of the state, regardless of whether the intention to forward the property existed when the property was acquired or imported into the state, if it remains in Texas for 175 days or less for assembly, storage, manufacture, processing, or fabrication. The proposed amendment would authorize the governing body of a county, municipality, school district, or junior college district to prevent the exemption of this tangible personal property from taxation by taking official action before April 1, 1990. A county, municipality, school district, or junior college district could rescind a decision to tax the property, in which case the exemption would become effective in the year of the rescission and the property could not thereafter be taxed.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment promoting economic growth, job creation, and fair tax treatment for Texans who export goods to other states and nations by restoring and allowing, on a local option basis, an ad valorem tax exemption for certain personal property that is in Texas only temporarily for the purpose of assembling, storing, manufacturing, processing or fabricating."

PROPOSITION NO. 6 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 4 proposes a constitutional amendment that

would enable the legislature to provide, by general or special law, that members of a hospital district board may serve terms not to exceed four years. Currently, hospital district board members' terms are two years.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"Authorizing the members of a hospital district governing board to serve four-year terms."

PROPOSITION NO. 7 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 40 proposes a constitutional amendment that would change the format of the oath of office for officeholders in this state. All elected and appointed officers would be required to take an oath or affirmation swearing to faithfully execute the duties of office and to preserve, protect, and defend the constitution and laws of the State and the United States. In addition, each elected and appointed officer would be required to sign a sworn statement that he or she had not paid, offered, or promised anything of value for a vote or to secure appointment to an office, as applicable. The written, sworn statement would be filed with the secretary of state. The information in the statement is currently contained in the oaths of office taken by elected and appointed officials.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to require that a member of the legislature, the secretary of state, and an elected or appointed officer, before assuming office, sign a written oath stating that the member, the secretary of state, or the officer did not engage in bribery to obtain the office."

PROPOSITION NO. 8 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 24 proposes a constitutional amendment that would allow the legislature to authorize the issuance of up to \$400 million in general obligation bonds. The proceeds of the bonds could be used to acquire, construct, or equip new corrections institutions, mental health and mental retardation institutions, youth corrections institutions, and statewide law enforcement facilities, and to repair and renovate existing facilities of those institutions. The bonds would constitute a general obligation of the state. The bonds and interest on the bonds would be paid from the first money coming into the treasury that is not otherwise appropriated by the constitution, less any amount in a sinking fund at the end of the preceding fiscal year that is pledged to payment of the bonds or interest.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment authorizing the issuance of general obligation bonds for projects relating to facilities of corrections institutions, youth corrections institutions, and mental health and mental retardation institutions and for the expansion of statewide law enforcement facilities."

PROPOSITION NO. 9 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 101 proposes a constitutional amendment that would authorize the legislature to pass laws to organize and combine state agencies that perform criminal justice functions. The legislature could combine into one or more agencies all agencies that have authority over the confinement and supervision of convicted criminals, that set standards for or distribute state funds to political subdivisions with authority over the confinement and supervision of convicted criminals, and that gather information about criminal justice administration. Agencies that could be combined would include the Texas Department of Corrections, the Board of Pardons and Paroles, and the Texas Adult Probation Commission. The amendment would also authorize the legislature to pass laws authorizing the appointment of members of more than one department of government to serve on the governing body.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to organize and combine various state agencies that perform criminal justice functions."

PROPOSITION NO. 10 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 4 proposes a constitutional amendment that would authorize the legislature to enact laws requiring or permitting judges to advise juries that a defendant convicted of a criminal offense can receive credit for good conduct that results in a shorter prison term and that eligibility for parole or mandatory supervision can also affect the length of time a convicted criminal serves in prison.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to require or permit courts to inform juries about the effect of good conduct time and eligibility for parole or mandatory supervision on the period of incarceration served by a defendant convicted of a criminal offense."

PROPOSITION NO. 11 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 102 proposes a constitutional amendment that would increase the per diem of members of the Legislature. The amount of per diem allowed during a calendar year would be equal to the maximum amount allowed for federal income tax purposes as of January 1 of that same year as a deduction for living expenses incurred by a state legislator. The per diem of \$30 would increase to \$81, which is the current maximum living expense deduction.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to set the amount of per diem received by a member of the legislature at the amount allowed for federal income tax purposes as a deduction for living expenses incurred by a state legislator in connection with official business."

PROPOSITION NO. 12 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 53 proposes a constitutional amendment that would authorize the legislature to provide for the use of the permanent school fund and the income from the permanent school fund to guarantee bonds issued by the state for the purpose of providing loans or purchasing the bonds of school districts to acquire, construct, renovate, or improve instructional facilities. If the permanent school fund were required to make payment as a result of its guarantee of bonds issued by the state, the fund would have to be reimbursed immediately from the state treasury. The amount of bonds guaranteed by the permanent school fund could not exceed \$750 million unless a higher amount was authorized by a two-thirds vote of both houses of the legislature. If a school district were to become delinquent on a loan, the amount of the delinquency would be offset against other aid to which the district was entitled.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to provide for using the permanent school fund and its income to guarantee bonds issued by the state for the purpose of aiding school districts."

PROPOSITION NO. 13 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 19 proposes a constitutional amendment that would provide a bill of rights for crime victims. This constitutional amendment would give crime victims the right to be treated with fairness and respect and to be reasonably protected from the defendant. On his request, the crime victim would have the right to notification of court proceedings, the right to be present at all public court proceedings unless a court determines that the victim's testimony would be affected by hearing other testimony, the right to confer with a representative of the prosecutor's office, the right to restitution, and the right to information about the conviction, sentence, imprisonment, and release of the defendant. The legislature would be authorized to enact laws to define the term "victim," to enforce the rights of crime victims, and to provide that certain public officers and agencies are not liable for a failure to protect a victim's rights.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment

providing a bill of rights for crime victims."

PROPOSITION NO. 14 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 71 proposes a constitutional amendment that would require the district attorney in Fort Bend County to be elected and serve terms at the same times as criminal district attorneys in the state. Currently, criminal district attorneys are elected in gubernatorial election years and district attorneys are elected in presidential election years.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment requiring a district attorney serving in Fort Bend County to be elected and serve a term in the manner provided by general law for criminal district attorneys."

PROPOSITION NO. 15 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 32 proposes a constitutional amendment that would authorize the legislature, by general law, to permit charitable raffles conducted by qualified nonprofit organizations. The amendment would require that the raffles be conducted, promoted, and administered only by members of the qualified nonprofit organizations and that the proceeds from the sale of raffle tickets must be spent for the charitable purposes of the organizations.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit and regulate raffles conducted by certain nonprofit organizations for charitable purposes."

PROPOSITION NO. 16 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 34 proposes a constitutional amendment allowing the legislature to pass general laws authorizing the creation of hospital districts upon approval of a majority of the qualified voters of the district. The amendment would also permit the legislature to authorize the creation of hospital districts by general or special law in counties with populations of 75,000 or less and to authorize the commissioners courts of such counties to levy ad valorem taxes and issue general obligation bonds for the support and maintenance of such districts.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment granting to the people the right to decide whether to create and maintain hospital districts to protect the public well-being in a manner independent of the legislature."

PROPOSITION NO. 17 ON THE BALLOT

House Joint Resolution 33 proposes a constitutional amendment that would allow the legislature, by general law, to authorize the use of public money to provide local fire departments and other public fire-fighting organizations loans or other financial assistance to purchase fire-fighting equipment and to aid in complying with federal and state law. The legislature would also be allowed to authorize the use of public money for scholarships and grants to educate and train members of these organizations. Part of the money could be used for administrative costs of this program. The legislature would provide for the terms and conditions of all such scholarships, grants, loans, and other financial assistance.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment authorizing the state to provide scholarships, grants, loans, and other financial assistance to local fire departments and other public fire-fighting organizations to purchase fire-fighting equipment, to aid in providing necessary equipment and facilities to comply with federal and state law, and to educate and train their members."

PROPOSITION NO. 18 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 44 proposes a constitutional amendment that would repeal subsection (e) of Article III, Section 50-d of the constitution. Article III, Section 50-d currently allows the Texas Water Development Board to issue and sell Texas agricultural water conserva-

tion bonds in an amount not to exceed \$200 million, if two-thirds of the members of each house of the legislature approve. Under subsection (e), this authority will expire in November, 1989. Repeal of subsection (e) by passage of this amendment would continue in effect the authority to issue and sell the bonds.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to eliminate certain time limitations relating to the issuance of Texas agricultural water conservation bonds."

PROPOSITION NO. 19 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 59 proposes a constitutional amendment that would allow local governments to invest their funds as authorized by the legislature. Currently, the constitutional prohibition against a grant of public money to an individual, association, or corporation or against becoming a stockholder in a corporation, association, or company prevents local governments from making some kinds of investments. This proposed amendment would allow local governments to make any investments authorized by the legislature.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to authorize local governments to invest their funds as provided by law."

PROPOSITION NO. 20 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 16 proposes a constitutional amendment which, if passed, would abolish the office of county surveyor in Cass, Ector, Garza, Smith, Bexar, Harris, and Webb Counties. A majority of the voters in an affected county must vote in favor of this proposed amendment before the office is abolished in that county. If the office of county surveyor is abolished in any of these counties, the powers, duties, and functions of the office are transferred to a county officer or employee designated by the commissioners court of the county in which the office is abolished.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment to abolish the office of county surveyor in Cass, Ector, Garza, Smith, Bexar, Harris, and Webb Counties."

PROPOSITION NO. 21 ON THE BALLOT

Senate Joint Resolution 74 proposes a constitutional amendment that would authorize the legislature to enact laws authorizing the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or its successor to provide for, issue, and sell an additional \$75 million in general obligation bonds as college savings bonds. The form, terms, and denominations of the bonds would be prescribed by law. The interest rate and installments would be prescribed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or its successor. The maximum net effective interest rate would be set by law. Proceeds from the sale of the bonds would be credited to the Texas opportunity plan fund, which is used to make loans to students to attend institutions of higher education in Texas. The bonds and interest on the bonds would be payable from the first money coming into the treasury in each fiscal year that is not already appropriated by the constitution, less the amount remaining in the sinking fund at the close of the prior fiscal year.

The proposed amendment will appear on the ballot as follows:

"The constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of general obligation bonds as college savings bonds to provide educational loans to students and to encourage the public to save for a college education."

Estos son los informes explicatorios sobre las enmiendas propuestas a la constitución que aparecerán en la boleta el día 7 de noviembre de 1989. Si usted no ha recibido una copia de los informes en español, podrá obtener una gratis por llamar al 1/800/252/8683 o por escribir al Secretario de Estado, P.O. Box 12060, Austin, Texas 78711.