

Friday, September 21, 1990

Report shows Republican representatives use free mail perk more than Democrats

WASHINGTON (AP) — Texas Republicans in the House of Representatives use their free mail perk more than Democrats, according to a report released Thursday by the National Taxpayers Union.

But the report is not comprehensive, the group said. And it is not fair, aides to Texas congressmen who rank high on the list said.

"That survey is so far off and so unrepresentative of what goes out of members' offices, it's, to me, extremely unfair they would publish something like that," Trish Brink, spokeswoman for Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Sugar Land, said. "What they were trying to do was certainly admirable ... but there's no way they can give an accurate reflection."

DeLay ranked No. 2 among the 27-member delegation in number of pieces sent in mass mailings last year. Members of the House, unlike the Senate, are not required to disclose

Spokeswoman calls survey 'unrepresentative' of mailings

how much mail they send from their offices.

The National Taxpayers Union, which advocates reform of congressional mailing privileges, gathered the most information it could from the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards, James Davidson, the group's president, said.

But that wasn't much, he said. The commission only tracks mailings that are sent to every address in a congressional district. Not included are letters that are individually addressed, either by typewriter or computer label. Those are also sent at no cost to the member.

The group said many members forgo the commission by not sending blanket mailings. Instead, members use elaborate address lists or target special groups, like veterans or senior citizens.

For instance, the group said Rep. Kika de la Garza, D-Mission, never sent a blanket mailing to every address in his south Texas district last year. But the congressman sends newsletters each week to about 600 constituents and others, an aide said.

"All these members who don't go through franking or whose files do not include everything they mail out, they're not going to call the National Taxpayers Union and say 'Gee, I

sent out a lot more mail,' " Brink said.

"We wouldn't be surprised if some members of the House of Representatives are spending nearly \$700,000 to \$800,000 in 1989 and 1990 just for direct printing and postage costs alone," David Keating, executive vice president of the National Taxpayers Union, said.

The free mail perk, or frank, allows incumbents to publicly finance their re-election campaigns, Keating said.

"The average incumbent spends more on the frank than the average challenger spends on his entire election campaign," he said.

Members of the group stood in front of a tractor-trailer truck at the Capitol to announce their findings. They said the truck could be filled with the amount of mail House members send to constituents in a single day.

Fraternity hazing investigated Victim attempts to find attackers' frat photos

AUSTIN (AP) — Under fire for doing little to stop a rash of assaults, Greek officials are gathering photographs of one fraternity's members to help a University of Texas student identify his attackers.

Dan Medlin, executive director of the Interfraternity Council, said it was assisting in the investigation of the Sept. 3 attack on UT student Ross Tangum, the Austin American-Statesman reported Thursday.

Travis County Attorney Ken Oden predicted the IFC help will be welcome. "I can't say they've been very cooperative in enforcement up until now," he said.

Tangum said he was punched by two men after members of a crowd, running from the Sigma Nu fraternity, accused him of belonging to another fraternity.

If they are members of a UT fra-

ternity, Medlin said, "we (the IFC) will expect their immediate expulsion from that fraternity."

Meanwhile, Oden said he met with representatives from Austin police and UT police to discuss the status of several assault investigations.

"We're taking it pretty seriously," Oden said. "I had hoped that the prosecutions we had undertaken last year ... would send a clearer signal to the fraternities to police themselves and discourage this kind of behavior instead of rewarding it."

He referred to the September 1988 death of Gregg Scott Phillips, a UT Delta Tau Delta fraternity member who fell off a cliff after running from two other students during a fraternity prank. The fraternity was charged with hazing.

Police program to combat auto theft

By BRIDGET HARROW
Of The Battalion Staff

The College Station Police Department will begin an automobile decal registration program today to reduce area car thefts.

The Combat Auto Theft program is similar to auto theft programs adopted by the Houston and Dallas police departments.

Officer Craig Anderson, with the College Station Police Department, says 100 vehicles already have been reported stolen this year and the number likely will increase.

"We have a large amount of auto thefts that occur here, usually starting in the beginning of the fall semester and going all the way through the spring," he says.

The CAT program originated in New York in 1986. In two and a half years, the program registered 21,000 vehicles, and of those vehicles, only 21 were stolen, Anderson says.

Under the program, owners register their vehicles with the police department and sign a consent form certifying the vehicle usually is not operated between 1 and 5 a.m.

Two bright yellow stickers are put on the vehicle —

one on the front windshield and one on the rear windshield.

Each sticker has a number and if the vehicle is stopped, the officer calls and verifies the driver is the owner of the vehicle or has authorization to use it.

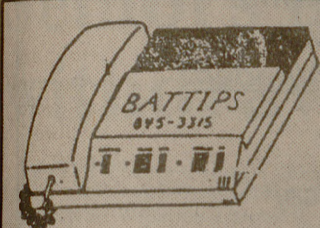
"If we see the vehicle out between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m., which is the time most vehicles are stolen, we have a chance to catch the vehicle, if it is stolen, while it is out on the roadway and before the owner even knows his vehicle is gone," Anderson says.

He says participation in the program reduces the chance of a vehicle being stolen by 48 percent. This percentage is based on a survey of all the nation's auto theft programs.

"And even if the car does make it out of town and it is taken to Houston, Dallas, or any other city that has a similar program, those police departments can also stop the car also if they see the sticker on it," Anderson says.

Registration for the program is free, and Anderson says the police department is encouraging student participation.

"We want to get as many students as possible to register for the program," he says. "We realize a lot of students are out after 1 a.m., but it's a choice they have to make if they want to reduce the chances of their car being stolen."



BATTIPS

Anyone with story suggestions can call BATTIPS. The Battalion's phone line designed to improve communication between the newspaper and its readers.

The BATTIPS number is 845-3315.

Ideas can include news stories, feature ideas, and personality profiles of interesting people.

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Two bright yellow stickers are put on the vehicle —

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