

The Battalion

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The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M University and Bryan-College Station.

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 students, administrators, faculty or the A&M Board of Regents.

The Battalion is an entirely student-managed branch of Student Publications, an independent entity that operates closely with the Department of Journalism.

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BATTIPS

The Battalion encourages its readers to contribute story ideas and suggestions by calling 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. Readers also are encouraged to offer any other suggestions that could improve the newspaper.

Pari-mutuel gambling

Law lowers race taxes

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Ann Richards has signed into law an 80 percent cut in the state's share of horse race wagering, which supporters said will bring major league horse racing to Texas.

"There is no reason for Texas to take a backseat to anyone, and racing is no exception," David Freeman, executive secretary of the Texas Racing Commission, said Tuesday.

But opponents described the tax break as a breach of trust between state officials and voters who approved pari-mutuel gambling at the state's current tax level.

"It makes us look like we've been fooled again," said Sue Cox, executive director of the anti-gambling group Texans Who Care.

The new law scraps the 5 percent tax on each dollar gambled and replaces it with a sliding-scale tax that would start at 1 percent for the first \$100 million wagered at a track.

The law also allows wagering at Texas horse and dog tracks on televised broadcasts of races held in other parts of the country and sets up a new category for county fair horse racing, which will be allowed to run 5 days per year.

The law does not change the 6 percent tax on greyhound racing.

Richards has said the lowered tax is needed to get major horse tracks in Texas.

Only a few smaller horse tracks are currently operating. No Class 1 tracks, allowed in the Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth and San Antonio areas, have been licensed.

Horsemen, who initially agreed to the 5 percent tax when the question was adopted by voters in 1987, subsequently said that tax was too high to allow profitable operations of a Class 1 track.

"I think people felt that when racing passed, they had in mind something more in the nature of Remington Park (in Oklahoma City)," Freeman said.

He said lowering the tax will help that become a reality by making it more attractive for investors to sink money — estimates are in the \$45 million to \$75 million range — to build and operate top flight tracks.

Harris County court rejects state's prison reform plan

HOUSTON (AP) — The Harris County Commissioners Court on Tuesday rejected the state's offer to solve crowded conditions at county jails, scuttling the Legislature's \$500 million prison reform plan.

Last month, the Legislature approved a bill that would end lawsuits against the state over inmate backlogs. Twelve counties are suing to force the state to take thousands of felons currently held in local jails.

But a provision in the bill holds that if all of the counties involved

do not agree to a settlement by June 15, the bill automatically dies.

The state is offering to accept all its prisoners from overcrowded county jails by Sept. 1, 1995. But counties that accept the plan would have to agree to drop jail crowding lawsuits against the state and would only be partially reimbursed for the costs of housing the prisoners in the meantime.

"Either way we go, Harris County's going to be out of money," Harris County Judge Jon Lindsay said Tuesday following the commissioners' closed door session.

The commissioners said they could not agree to the state's request to drop the lawsuit, contending that only the inmates who sued the state have the right to drop the lawsuit.

Harris County attorney Mike Driscoll said the 12 counties that sued the state are in a position to ask for a better deal.

"All the counties in Texas now are starting to see that the state of Texas has been asleep at the wheel for the last year," Driscoll said.

What's Up

Wednesday

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: General discussion at noon. Call CDPE at 845-0280 for more information.

TEXAS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION COMMISSION (TEAC): General membership meeting — plans for activities during the summer months. Everyone interested in environmental concerns welcome at 7 p.m. in Zachry 119A. Call Charlie at 823-3577 for more information.

EPISCOPAL STUDENT CENTER: Eucharist and community dinner at 6:15 p.m. at Canterbury House at 902 George Bush Drive.

LUTHERAN STUDENT FELLOWSHIP: Evening prayer at 6:30 p.m. at the University Lutheran Chapel.

Thursday

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS: General discussion at 6 p.m. Call CDPE at 845-0280 for more information.

CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST: Weekly meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. in Rudder 308. Everyone Welcome! Call John Ferguson at 696-1091 for more information.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: General discussion at noon. Call CDPE at 845-0280 for more information.

A&M CYCLING: To discuss summer racing and training. New members welcome at 7 p.m. in 231 MSC. Call Stephen Haydel at 696-3945 for more information.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no later than three business days before the desired run date. We publish the name and phone number of the contact only if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are run on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3316.

Court punishes Texas family in benefits scam

DEL RIO (AP) — A federal judge sentenced seven members of an Eagle Pass family to prison or probation for an elaborate scheme to collect unemployment benefits for 1,800 migrant workers in 22 states.

The scam was uncovered when a computer discovered checks for 1,800 people were going to the office of a notary public in the border city of Eagle Pass, prosecutors said.

On Monday, U.S. District Judge Emilio Garza of Del Rio sentenced Daniel Ibarra Jr., 62, and six of his family members.

All had pleaded guilty April 3 and admitted their roles in the scheme in which unemployment benefits were collected from Texas and 21 other states and forwarded to the workers in Mexico for a fee.

Prosecutors were able to prove only about \$15,000 in fraudulent claims in this case, which was cracked with the use of an undercover agent. Officials said in many of the cases the migrant workers were not entitled to the unemployment benefits.

U.S. Attorney Ronald Ederer of San Antonio said the case was the first of its kind.

Federal officials said variations of the scheme have existed from Brownsville to El Paso.

900-number blocking offered by students' long-distance carrier

By K. Lee Davis
The Battalion

Texas A&M students living on campus do not have a call-blocking option because University phone lines cannot directly access the possible long-distance phone numbers.

Local telephone companies throughout Texas are offering customers the opportunity to block 900 and 976 pay-per-call information and entertainment services where the technology exists.

The block option was mandated by the Texas Public Utilities Commission in an attempt to relieve some of the problems consumers and business have had with the numbers.

A representative with the A&M communications office said the block option has to be exercised through a student's long-distance carrier.

Tim Raven, president of the Texas Telephone Association, said his organization believes the call-blocking option will alleviate most concerns about abuses connected with 900 service.

Melrose Canales, a customer service representative for GTE in Bryan-College Station, confirmed that the option was available in the area, but she added that few complaints have been received.

Philip Bode, a marketing di-

rector for AT&T in Houston, said major phone carriers have been working with the PUC to solve some of the problems associated with 900 number abuse.

He added, however, that some responsibility must be taken by the consumer for his or her actions.

"If you see a 900 number these days, you should know that there will be a charge for the call," he said.

Bode added that the calls ranged in price from 95 cents per minute to a maximum of \$49.95.

Under the call-blocking plan, telephone subscribers throughout Texas will receive ballots in their telephone bills notifying them of the 900 and 976 call-blocking option.

If a customer decides to block access to these numbers, the option initially will be carried out free of charge. If a customer later decides to remove the block and then reinstate it, there will be charge of \$10.25.

In areas where individual call blocking is not technically possible, access to 900 pay-per-call services will be blocked to all customers until the local telephone company's equipment is able to provide the selective blocking.

Storage tank leaks suspected carcinogen

FORT WORTH (AP) — A storage tank has leaked as much as 20,000 gallons of a suspected carcinogen at a U.S. Air Force-owned aircraft facility, the government said.

But General Dynamics officials said Tuesday the leaking chemical, trichloroethylene, would not affect Fort Worth's water supply.

"Experts are studying possible damage to two ground water aquifers, but Fort Worth doesn't draw its water from ground water aquifers," a Fort Worth Water Department statement said.

"All Fort Worth water comes from above-ground lakes and reservoirs; therefore, none of the city's drinking water sources are involved with the spill in any way."

A&M students perfect shuttle arm controls

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tion to a computer on the shuttle.

Students and professors are working on perfecting the computer's resolution and sending the information to the arm to direct its movements.

Everett said the arm's sensor might ultimately be used in other activities, such as docking the shuttle at a space station, installing the shuttle's solar panels, picking up tools in space or aligning machine tools.

Redfield said the project also might be used in the space station's proposed construction.

"All these activities need an arm that is very dexterous and requires a specific degree of accuracy," he said. "The computer will be used to control the accuracy of the system."

Redfield said NASA is looking at building smaller arms for the space station and the computer being used in this project might enable the arms to pick up tools and use them in the construction.

"This summer we'll be implementing the control of the arm with the manipulator development system down at Johnson Space Center," he said.

The relationship between the students working on the project and NASA was initiated by A&M alumnus Aaron Cohen, Class of '52, a director of Johnson Space Center.

Redfield said a good possibility exists that the results of this project will be useful to manipulators of mechanical arms throughout U.S. industry.

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