

## The Battalion Editorial Board

DOUGLAS PILS, Editor-in-Chief

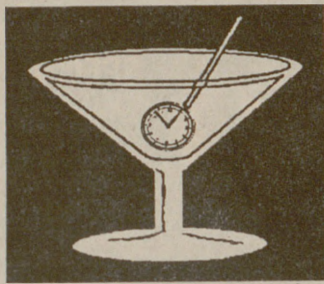
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The following opinions are a consensus of The Battalion opinion staff and senior editors.

## Even competition

### Later drinking hours mean fair trade

The subject of alcoholic beverages continues to stir up controversy on college campuses and in communities. Last Tuesday, the Bryan City Council provoked a local debate when it approved a plan to extend city drinking hours to 1 a.m. The plan will become a city ordinance if it passes another majority vote on the second reading, scheduled in early March.



The communities of Bryan and College Station need to consider all aspects of this proposal when deciding on its fate. Since these cities often act as a "joint community" on many issues, the businesses in the city of Bryan should have the same rights as those in College Station. It is not fair that Bryan's club and bar owners must stop their alcohol sales at midnight while their nearby competitors can operate an hour longer. Businesses

should not be penalized simply because of their location.

Some citizens in the area expressed concern that the longer drinking hours would have negative effects on public safety. Some questioned whether we really wanted to dump 40,000 drunks onto Bryan streets each year. Although it is attracting much attention, their fear is not based on fact. Extending the drinking hours will not cause 40,000 more drunks to be on Bryan's streets. In fact, the proposal would actually decrease the number of people rushing through the streets to get in on the extra drinking hour College Station offers.

When customers of Bryan bars want to drink after midnight, they have to drive all the way to College Station for the extra hour of business. Many of these people are not in a condition to drive, but they do so anyway just so they can continue to drink.

By changing the law, a small piece of the competitive spirit of American business will be preserved in Bryan-College Station.

## Less filling.

### End of big CD boxes signals less waste

After years of criticism from environmentalists and consumers, the recording industry has decided to eliminate the long boxes that contain new compact discs in the United States. Quite frankly, it's about time.

CD long boxes have been annoying and controversial since the introduction of the product in the United States. A decade ago, record stores wanted the CDs in a package that would fit into existing shelves designed for vinyl LPs and that would deter shoplifting.

The recording industry responded by putting new CDs in a cardboard box twice as long as the plastic box that protects the discs.

Long boxes have drawn fire from environmental groups due to the wasteful packaging. A large cardboard box and the shrink-wrap that covers the box seem rather ridiculous, especially as sales of the discs soared over the past 10 years. The waste also seems hypocritical in an industry whose artists thrive on environmental issues. In fact, recording artists helped pressure the industry to eliminate the boxes.

Many consumers are also critical of the long boxes, which make the product bulky and difficult to open.

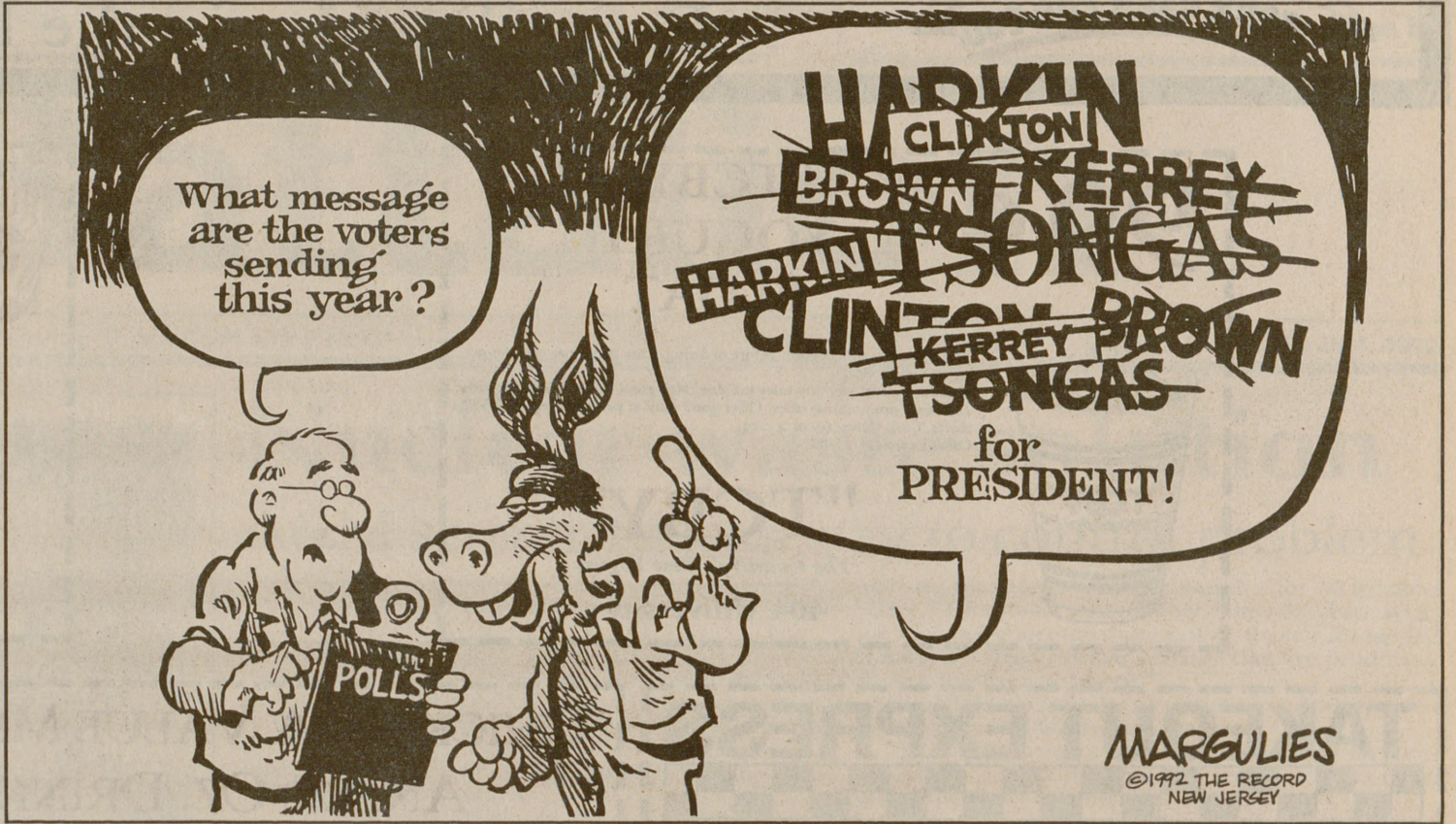
Most people expect the CD marketers to simply shrink-wrap the plastic boxes that protect the discs, a method that is now used in every country but the United States. This seems by far the most logical choice for record companies. The music industry tried a collapsible box/case combination called the "Eco-pack" over the past few years, but the case is expensive and awkward to use.

Industry officials say the Eco-packs never received support from consumers and environmentalists to justify its extra expense, and companies have never put the pack into widespread use.

Record stores are complaining that the new packaging will require millions of dollars in refitting store shelves -- money they claim the record industry should help reimburse. But the new packaging will save record companies money after some initial retooling, and the savings can be passed on to the music stores and to consumers.

The shrink-wrapped boxes are set to appear in April 1993, and the long boxes' reign will finally end.

In the meantime, collectors might consider saving embattled long boxes, which may become collectors' items for future generations.



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## Pieces of injustice

### Lawyers act like comic vultures when it comes to making money

What do you call 100,000 lawyers at the bottom of the ocean? A start.

I hate to start off a column with a joke, but I have difficulty talking about lawyers without saying or at least thinking something funny. We have far too many lawyers in this country doing far too much damage to the republic's ability to compete in world markets, have fun, prosecute criminals and even rescue people.

Lawyers today seem to be a lot like dogs, except dogs have leashes and lawyers are allowed to roam free. Both chase motor vehicles, though lawyers have a preference for ambulances. Dogs can chew off a person's limbs; lawyers can do far more damage. Lawyers get paid to take frivolous cases to court and sue the pants off another person. Dogs have few legal rights, but generally resent being compared to lawyers.



JON DESHAZO

This idea came up after reading a little current events recently on the exploits of some of our nation's lawyers. You know about the cabby who was sued for stopping a thief with the bumper of his cab and who now gets to fork over \$25,000. Here's a shocker: the thief won't even get a good bit of the money. The lawyer who represented him will be paid an enormous sum of money for that case. Why? Litigation fees, of course.

An inventor recently closed a case against Ford Motor Co. over claims he invented the intermittent wiper. He claimed Ford (and subsequently everybody else) owed him cash for patent infringement. He won a \$10 million claim, but cannot afford to continue litigation. His lawyers got all \$10 million.

The breast implant scare of late seems to revolve around health and safety. Dangerous or not, the litigation world mobilized when the

Food and Drug Administration forced a moratorium on the implants. There is dissension in the ranks. Some lawyers want the implant cases tried individually, while others want to present grievances collectively in a single suit. Lawyers who are against a collective suit say such case would infringe on an individual plaintiff's right to punitive damages. In either case, no matter how the FDA decides the issue, Dow Corning is dead meat in the eyes of lawyers.

A few years ago, the German automobile company Audi was fighting for its corporate life in America. "Concerned citizens groups" claimed that the Audi 5000 had a habit of getting into gear and hitting the gas pedal all by itself. Heavy amounts of litigation followed. The "unattended acceleration" claims were completely discounted and blame was placed on "pedal misapplication," a fancy term for hitting the go-pedal when you should have hit the stop-pedal. The damage was done, though. Audi paid dearly in sales and law fees and has never recovered its market share in America.

What's the difference between a skunk lying on a road and a lawyer lying on a road? The skunk's the one with skid marks in front of it.

Exxon, the same corporation that brought you the Exxon Valdez, was given a strange sentence recently. The company transferred an employee working in a sensitive position on an oil platform to a land job. The employee was an alcoholic and Exxon hoped to avoid another spill like the one in Alaska. The man sued Exxon to get his former job back even though his new job paid identically to his old one. Exxon lost the suit, and not only had to give the man his old job but also had to pay punitive damages. That's right, Exxon had to pay because it tried to remove an alcoholic from a sensitive position.

A dollar was lying on a table near Santa Claus, an honest lawyer and the Tooth Fairy. The lights went out and the dollar was gone. Who took it? The Tooth Fairy; the other two are figments of your imagination.

So far, the only person in the

government to mention just how badly litigation is out of control is our illustrious Vice President, J. Danforth Quayle. Quayle set forth a plan to revamp a good bit of the judicial system to increase efficiency and hopefully eliminate some of the more obscene misuses of the courts. The ideas he presented would, among other things, curb contingency fees and would force the losing side in a civil case to pay the winner's legal fees, a method used in most other civilized nations (and even a few uncivilized ones). He presented these ideas in a speech to the American Bar Association, the guys whose salaries would be affected by new curbs on litigation. Pretty gutsy move, I have to admit.

Not surprisingly, the association blasted Quayle for his ideas. They also disputed his facts. Quayle mentioned that the United States has 70 percent of the world's lawyers even though it has only 5 percent of the world's population. The association countered that we have only about 50 to 60 percent of the world's lawyers, and may have disputed the population quote. Of course, the association also said lawyers really aren't such bad guys.

Lawyers aren't entirely to blame for the republic's judicial fiasco. There are juries and judges in all these cases who allowed this to go on for years. Only now is the government beginning to wake up and take a peek at the mess it helped perpetuate by enacting broad, obtuse legislation with murky phrasing only a lawyer could love.

What are the chances of getting some real changes in the civil judicial corner? I'll give you a hint: most of our Congressmen are lawyers by profession.

In the mean time, a Texas federal judge suggested in a Wall Street Journal article that lawyers could be used instead of laboratory mice because: there are more lawyers; you don't get emotionally attached to lawyers; and there are some things the mice just won't do.

DeShazo is a sophomore electrical engineering major

## Mail Call

### Boney takes wrong stand on guns

I am writing in response to Brian Boney's editorial on gun control. He is obviously very uninformed on this issue and it is questionable whether a person with less than adequate information should be an opinion editor of a college newspaper. His beliefs and proposals outline a flawed rationale. I also must say that I resent his character assault on those who believe in the Second Amendment to our Constitution.

First, Boney states that a gun in the hand of a victim is useless if the attacker strikes first. This idea is false because thousands of people have thwarted armed attacks of criminals with these "useless" guns. Next Boney claims that so-called "assault weapons" can penetrate brick walls and are too dangerous for civilian ownership. First, an assault weapon is one that fires until empty with one action of the trigger. The government

prohibits unrestricted trade of these weapons. The question is: What does Boney describe as an "assault weapon?" The media organizations define an "assault weapon" as any gun modeled after military designs, though they are mechanically different. With some checking one can find that these military calibers actually are not as powerful as most bolt action hunting rifles about which Boney writes. Restrictions on purchasing guns fall into both federal and state jurisdiction. To purchase a firearm in Texas you must be a resident, 21 to buy pistols, and 18 to buy shotguns and rifles. Federal law does not allow convicted felons to own firearms. This means it is not as easy for anyone as Boney claims to buy a gun legally.

Boney uses these arguments to lead up to his cure all solution to end today's violence. His solution is to ban all firearms except bolt-action rifles and pump-action shotguns that have legitimate sporting uses. Boney should know that this ludicrous idea not only would be next to impossible to enforce, but also would do nothing to decrease crime.

His proposal to ban guns does not have a leg to stand on simply because it does not address the real problem. That problem is a criminal justice system that does not provide adequate deterrent to those considering using a gun to commit an illegal act. Efforts should be made to punish criminals with penalties fitting their crimes. Following this method of logic the federal government should ban motor vehicles that kill far more people annually than firearms. Guns don't kill people but people do. This mentality of placing blame on objects for society's ills makes no sense.

Don't take away the rights of law-abiding citizens. After all, if guns are outlawed, only the outlaws will have guns. Does Brian honestly think criminals who obtain their guns illegally anyway will care if legislation is passed making their possession of guns illegal in another aspect of the law? The only ones who would be affected are those who obey laws anyway. How does this improve our society?

I am sorry, Brian, but banning guns won't make our country a place where "shiny happy

people" like yourself and Michael Stipe will feel safe.

Chris Homan  
Class of '95

### Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers.

All letters are welcome. Letters must be signed and must include classification, address and a daytime phone number for verification purposes. They should be 250 words or less. Anonymous letters will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee the letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-2647.