

The Battalion

Vol. 92 No. 14 (14 pages)

"Serving Texas A&M Since 1893"

Thursday, September 17, 1992

Environment clause hinders trade debates

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Senate Democrats hammered the Bush administration Wednesday for negotiating a trade treaty they contend is toothless when it comes to enforcing Mexican environmental laws.

But Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William Reilly defended the accord, saying it would be a "major environmental mistake" if Congress voted down the pact.

Several Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee's international trade subcommittee denounced the North American Free Trade Agreement's environmental protections during a hearing.

"The NAFTA is silent on what I see as the most important environmental issue: ensuring that all parties to the agreement, including Mexico, enforce adequate environmental standards," said subcommittee chairman Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont. Baucus has called on the administration to re-open treaty talks to beef up environmental and worker retraining standards.

"Rather than attempt to address the environmental shortcomings of the NAFTA in a forthright manner, the administration has essentially resorted to empty rhetoric," he said.

Sen. Tom Daschle expressed similar concerns.

"An agreement is nothing more than a list of intentions unless it has the ability to be enforced," said Daschle, D-S.D. "If there is not proper enforcement, then really what do we have but some nice-sounding rhetoric that really makes a mockery of the whole process?"

But Reilly called the agreement a "very important environmental breakthrough."

"From our perspective, opposing the NAFTA on environmental grounds would be a major environmental mistake," he said. "No larger opportunity has come along in my memory to improve the conditions of the border."

Reilly praised Mexico's recent crackdowns against polluters and commitment to funding environmental cleanup programs, praise echoed by Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, who chairs the Finance Committee.

"I've been encouraged by a number of things I've seen Mexico do," said Bentsen, D-Texas.

And, he added, "Overall, I see a real opportunity for the NAFTA to promote improved environmental performance in all three countries."

Subcommittee Republicans, pointing to the pre-treaty cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico, said in the absence of an agreement further attention to the environment is unlikely.

"It's a step forward. It isn't 10 steps forward, but it's better than no steps forward," said Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore.

Reilly sought to allay fears that American companies would move to Mexico in search of weaker environmental standards and enforcement, saying that environmental costs are a small percentage of most firms' overhead.

"The number of companies that because of this treaty ... would be tempted to move to Mexico is relatively small," he said.

Rhode Island Republican Sen. John Chafee, a supporter of the administration's negotiations, urged Congress to remember that the treaty is an economic one — not "an environmental treaty with trade aspects."

"It deserves to be examined as such, using as a yardstick whether its adoption will advance or will hinder the long-term enhancement and protection of our, and our neighbor's, natural resources," he said.

In reply, Reilly said, "I think the trade treaty is being asked to carry a lot of environmental freight."

Also Wednesday, the first of the 40 private sector advisory group reports on the impact of the free trade pact was released. The report was compiled by the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations, which has the most wide-reaching mandate of all the advisory groups.

"On the whole, (the NAFTA) is a very positive thing," said American Express Co. Chairman and CEO James D. Robinson III, who chairs the advisory committee.

The group found that U.S. negotiators met or exceeded most of the panel's criteria — except in the opening of the Mexican energy market and Canadian exemptions in agriculture and intellectual property. Robinson also defended the environmental provisions in the agreement.

"I think if you look at the facts and get beyond the rhetoric you've got substantive progress that has been made," he said.

The two labor leaders on the advisory committee dissented from the report, saying the treaty "as presently drafted does not promote U.S. economic interests and, if implemented, would worsen the country's economic and social problems."



DARRIN HILL/The Battalion

Oscar Anderson, a nurse technician from Waco, takes blood from Kathryn Gunn, a freshman political science major from

Bridge City, during a blood drive held in the Commons on Wednesday.

Guerrero earns praise, support from governor

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Gov. Ann Richards on Wednesday defended Railroad Commission Chairman Lena Guerrero, saying she should be judged on her public record — not the admission she doesn't hold a college degree.

Richards said she had no second thoughts about naming Guerrero, a former three-term state House member, who was her first appointee after becoming governor.

"Lena Guerrero has a truly outstanding record as a member of the Texas Legislature, a member of the Railroad Commission. And I think that record speaks for itself," Richards said. "I would have appointed her on her public record. That's what matters here."

Guerrero, 34, filled a Railroad Commission vacancy and is seeking election this year to a full six-year term. For years, Guerrero's campaign literature and her official Texas House biography listed her as a graduate of the University of Texas-Austin. Some of that literature also claimed she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Controversy erupted late last week, when news reporters began asking about her academic creden-

tials. Guerrero says she always thought she was a graduate. She said she was stunned to learn after checking with UT last Thursday that she was four hours short of the 120 hours of class work needed for a bachelor's degree. Although she first declined to make public her college transcripts, Guerrero's campaign said it planned to do so late Wednesday.

As for the Phi Beta Kappa references, she said, "I have never myself, I believe, made that claim."

This week, a former partner in Guerrero's advertising business, Richard Hamner, said it was he who wrote the campaign biography that included the Phi Beta Kappa reference.

Her claim that she didn't learn about her lack of a diploma until last Thursday also was being questioned. On Tuesday, the head of the UT Ex-Students Association said Guerrero was warned in 1991 of doubts about her claim to be a graduate.

"We told her that the university's records didn't match with her records and that when she had time, she ought to check it out," said Roy Vaughan, executive director of the ex-students' group.

Behavior at All-U Night threatens future of event

By TANYA SASSER

Staff writer of THE BATTALION

There may never be another All University Night at Texas A&M because of the misconduct that occurred this year, said the president of the Residence Hall Association Wednesday evening.

Kim Tenpas informed over 20 dorm presidents at the RHA President's Roundtable that Texas A&M President William H. Mobley has expressed disappointment with the recent actions of dorm residents.

"Mobley is upset because the residence halls acted inappropriately at All-U Night," she said. "There was offensive language, fighting and violence. Two women even filed sexual harassment charges."

Tenpas said the presidents are the leaders of their halls and the residents are looking to them for guidance.

"This might have been the last year for All-U Night if something doesn't get done," she said. "You can let this be an awareness thing. Let your residents know that things have to change."

Thad York, vice president of

RHA said the year has gotten off to a shaky start and the dorm presidents need to use their authority.

"They're serious about ending All-U Night," he said. "You need to exercise restraint. This year took off like a ball of fire and it's up to y'all to put the reigns on it."

York suggested the presidents speak to their residents about the seriousness of sexual harassment because some students believe the language used at All-U-Night was suggesting sexual harassment.

Tenpas said the presidents should hold forums dealing with these kinds of issues. The issue of dorm students verbally harassing fraternity and sorority members in the dorms was also addressed. York said that many people, including Mobley, recognize that the number of people that are opposed to fraternities and sororities is growing and needs to stop. Many fraternity and sorority rushers were harassed by dorm residents as they were leaving for rush, Tenpas said.

"We're all Aggies and we need to treat each other with respect."

Bush proposes tax breaks for businesses

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — On the verge of vetoing a family leave bill for the second time, President Bush on Wednesday belatedly proposed a \$500 million tax credit alternative to the Democrats' compulsory approach.



Bush

Bush complained it was "very peculiar and highly political" for the Democrats to wait this late in the election year to renew the fight over whether businesses should be required to give workers unpaid time off to care for a newborn child or sick relative.

"I think you should be skeptical of any new proposal coming from a president with 48 days left" until the election, said George Stephanopoulos, communications director for Democratic nominee Bill Clinton, who strongly supports the Democrats' bill.

"Unfortunately, they and my opponents believe in a govern-

Plan suggests company write-offs for formation of family leave policy

ment-dictated mandate that increases costs and loses jobs," said Bush, adding, "There's an awful lot of politics at play here."

The bill passed by Congress would require employers with more than 50 workers to allow employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave annually to deal with medical emergencies, including the birth of a child, adoption or a sickness in the family.

Bush's proposal would allow businesses with fewer than 500 workers to write off their taxes up to \$20 per day for as many as 60 days of leave a year per worker, or a maximum of \$1,200 per employee.

The White House said Bush would pay for the tax credits by cutting other spending. Rep. Newt Gingrich of Georgia, the GOP whip, said Bush would propose trimming doctors' and hospitals' lab fees and other administrative costs paid for by the government.

Bush said at a meeting with GOP leaders that "there's some \$60 billion that (the Office of Management and Budget) knows about where we can allocate to this."

Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., called Bush's proposal "half-baked" and said if Bush knows where \$60 billion can be found, he should spend some of it on Head Start, immunization and nutrition programs for poor children.

White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater said nine out of 10 workers in big- and medium-sized companies already have family leave plans.

"The great need is at the lower end," he said, but the Democrats' bill "doesn't apply to companies under 50 people."

Fitzwater said the White House made overtures before to the Democratic leaders, but "they refused to discuss anything that was not mandated."

The family leave bill passed both chambers with bipartisan support and Republican backers expressed skepticism at Bush's tax-credit proposal.

Rep. Marge Roukema, R-N.J., said she was "somewhat perplexed" by the timing of Bush's proposal.

"It may be an interesting supplement, but it is not a substitute

for this bill," she said.

Sen. Christopher Bond, R-Mo., the leading Republican sponsor of the congressional measure, said he was glad Bush was talking about the issue, but "we sincerely believe this measure we've crafted is the answer."

The Republicans have charged that Democratic policies would do more harm than good by raising taxes and putting people out of work.

Some polls indicate that voters are turning a deaf ear to the GOP family values pitch.

In a New York Times-CBS News Poll that asked voters to name the single most important issue, 46 percent cited the economy and unemployment. Only 1 percent singled out family values.

A new poll from the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press concluded that family values are backfiring on the GOP and hurting Bush with younger voters and the better educated.

Fitzwater said other polls indicate "that family values is working."

The Democrats do not deny that they held up the family leave bill to pressure Bush to sign it or cast an embarrassing veto right before the election.

Leaders to change government focus

By JULI PHILLIPS

Reporter of THE BATTALION

The new student government leaders said Wednesday night one of their main goals is to legitimize student government in the eyes of the students.

There remains a misunderstanding of the role of student government," Student Body President Steve Beller said. "People sometimes confuse student government as an organization of students instead of an organization for students."

The Student Senate lead the way for the legitimization process with a bill that was introduced last year by the current Speaker of the Senate Brian Walker.

The Senator/Constituent En-

hancement Bill requires senators to meet with their constituency and report activity in their constituency back to the Senate.

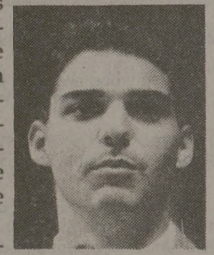
The next step, Beller said, was the creation of the new vice president of public relations and marketing position to maximize networking both within and outside student government.

The other change resulting from the new focus is the reinstatement of a chief of staff position.

After the Student Senate unanimously passed the motion to create the position, Warren Talbot, president of Off Campus Aggies, became the new Chief of Staff.

"We want to develop a co-ownership with the students throughout this year," Jerry Hooton, vice president of administration, said.

"We want students to know that they can come to us to help them resolve their issues and concerns."



Beller