

Tobin Boenig ready to serve as speaker of student senate.

JAY ROBBINS: Political selfishness and public ignorance have perverted the health care plan into a typical mess of red tape.

Trent Driver looks forward to taking the field during Saturday's game in Baton Rouge.



THE BATTALION

STATE BRIEFS

Agencies group to save endangered bird

HOUSTON (AP) — A giant forest-giant company has joined forces with three federal and state agencies to rescue the endangered, red-capped woodpecker. Champion International Corp. signed an agreement Wednesday to allow the government agencies to manage 2,000 acres of the company's land in East Texas. Officials said the agreement is the first of its kind in this area and one of a few in the entire country.

Boats seized to protect turtles

GALVESTON, Texas (AP) — Coast guard and federal marine fisheries officials have seized the catches of two trawling vessels for violations of regulations meant to protect turtles. A catch of 3,828 pounds of shrimp was seized by the National Marine Fisheries Service Thursday from a Texas-based trawling boat in the Galveston Bay Entrance channel. NMFS agents found that the grids of the Turtle Excluder Devices installed in the boat were at an improper angle, making escape difficult for any trapped turtles. The fisheries service sold the boat's catch to a Galveston fish house for \$18,160.55. The captain was issued a citation.

Richardson takes a shot from Bush

HOCKLEY, Texas (AP) — Republican gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush took a shot at his opponent's crime policies today, then grabbed a shotgun and took some real shots at voters as the state dove hunting season began. Using a borrowed 20-gauge shotgun, Bush fired off seven shots at doves during a more than hour-long hunt in a field northwest of Houston. He said. Before picking up the weapon before sunrise, Bush took aim at incumbent Gov. Ann Richards, saying she should apologize to voters for signing a new penal code he contends actually reduces prison time.

Mental facility shut down for violations

AUSTIN (AP) — A facility for the mentally retarded will shut down following investigations that turned up numerous problems, a state official says. The Cresthaven Nursing Center had been cited by the Texas Department of Human Services for having life-threatening conditions, residents left unattended in dangerous situations, and lack of staff. In May, DHS took over operation of the facility for two weeks. In June, the facility failed to pass its annual state inspection. Tony Venza, deputy commissioner of DHS, said Cresthaven officials notified the state that they decided to cease operation. "They threw in the towel," he told the Austin American-Statesman.

Texas county named least-populated

WASHINGTON (AP) — West Texas' Loving County, home to more oil wells than people, is the nation's least-populated county. That's according to the 1994 County and City Data Book, which the Census Bureau unveils today. Loving County, named after a one-time trail boss, provides plenty of elbow room for its 141 residents, some of whom tend the county's 1,022 oil wells. Joining Loving in the nation's least-populated category are King County in Northwest Texas, with 339 inhabitants; and Kenedy County in South Texas.

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Economic relief likely for N. Ireland

EDGARTOWN, Mass. (AP) — The United States is holding out the possibility of increased economic aid for Northern Ireland to help cement the cease-fire the Irish Republican Army is offering after 25 years of violent resistance to British rule.

The Clinton administration has made no promises and the specific outline of an aid package remained unclear Wednesday. But the Irish Republic is dispatching Deputy Prime Minister Dick Spring to Martha's Vineyard, President Clinton's vacation island off Cape Cod, to discuss on Friday the prospects for peace and for an aid package to help keep it glued together. "I think we're looking for ways to certainly facilitate and encourage the peace process ... including facilitating economic development," White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said.

Clinton to discuss aid package with deputy prime minister in hopes to secure cease-fire

White House aides said that while no commitments have been made, it was likely Clinton will approve an aid package. Myers noted the United States already contributes \$20 million a year to the International Fund for Ireland for projects on both sides of the north-south border that divides Ireland. And she said that while there were no plans for a summit with the nations and parties involved, "I certainly wouldn't rule it out at some point in the future." Clinton caused a stir in Britain when he pledged during the 1992 presidential campaign to send a peace envoy to Ire-

land. The British government has resisted outside involvement in what it considers an internal matter. Clinton on Wednesday placed calls of congratulations to Irish and British leaders, talking to them at the beginning and at the end of an early-morning family bicycle ride along the ocean shores of Martha's Vineyard. He first called Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds and then British Prime Minister John Major. He made both calls from one of the vans of his accompanying motorcade. "The IRA's decision to join the political

process can mark the beginning of a new era that holds the promise of peace," Clinton said in a statement. From Clinton on down, administration officials repeatedly used the word "permanent" to describe their view that the cease-fire offered by the IRA did nearly everything that could be done in words to encourage an end to the carnage that has marked a quarter century of civil strife in Northern Ireland. "I urge the IRA and all who have supported it to fulfill the promise of today's announcement to end the use and support of violence," Clinton said. In discussing developments, the White House gladly claimed credit for expanding diplomatic contacts with both countries and approving temporary visas for IRA leaders to come to the United States for discussions.

A&M president names interim vice president, provost

Texas A&M President Ray Bowen named Dr. J. Charles Lee as interim executive vice president and provost. Lee, associate vice chancellor and executive associate dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, will replace Dr. A. Benton Cocanougher, who has served in the interim position since last August. "I am honored to have this opportunity to serve the University," Lee said, "and look forward to working with President Bowen and our faculty, staff and students in moving the University ahead." Bowen selected Lee after receiving recommendations from a search committee and then consulting with other faculty, staff and administrators across campus. A search committee will now start looking for a permanent replacement. "Dr. Lee brings to this position a wealth of experience that will make him a valuable member of the University administration," Bowen said. "He has pledged to be an advocate for faculty members all across the University and to represent their interests while serving in this interim position." Lee has served for the last 11 years in a variety of administrative positions at Texas A&M and within the A&M System. He joined the University in 1983 as head of the Department of Forest Science. Cocanougher resigned as senior vice president and provost Aug. 5 and has returned to his former position as dean of the College of Business Administration.

Measures taken to collect money for student loans

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defaults on student loans are declining as indebted graduates scramble to "do what's right" and the government uses new tools to dig into their wages and tax refunds in case they don't. Taxpayers are expected to spend \$2 billion this year paying off uncollected student loans, down from a peak of \$3.6 billion in 1991, Education Secretary Richard Riley said Thursday. "After years of rising defaults, it's going the other way," he said. The proportion of loans in default dropped to 15 percent in 1992 — the latest year for which figures are available — from a high of 22.4 percent two years earlier. "What it demonstrates is that the country is not made up of a bunch of people trying to con the federal government," said Leo Kornfeld, deputy assistant education secretary. "The large majority of people are trying to do what's right." As usual, federally backed loans for students of beauty, hair and cosmetology schools were among the hardest to recover. The government took its biggest gamble in Nevada, where three gaming schools joined a long list of other institutions to drive up the state's default rate on student loans to 34 percent, by far the country's highest. Louisiana (23.1 percent), Connecticut (22.3), Alaska (21.1), Florida (20.9) and California (20.1) were the other states where more than one in five student loans was in default.

Texas study shows smoking regulations hard to enforce

ATLANTA (AP) — Cigarette vending machines are frequently located where children, especially young adolescents, can easily buy their products, a Texas study found. Of 116 vending machines surveyed, 59 machines, or 51 percent, were in areas considered easily available to children, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday. That's more than double the nationwide estimate, 22.5 percent, by the industry group National Automatic Merchandising Association. The head of the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, Michael Eriksen, said the study reinforces how simple it is for children to buy cigarettes from vending machines. "Any kid can buy cigarettes if they want to from vending machines as long as it's not broken," Eriksen said. Vending machines, which the industry group says account for about 1 percent of cigarette sales, must be

Vending machines cause problems by making cigarettes readily accessible to children

registered in Texas, but the owners do not have to inform the state of their locations. Health officials found most of the machines surveyed in the Arlington, Texas, area in gas stations, motel lobbies, restaurants, food stores and recreational sites. "We hit every vending machine in 22 contiguous ZIP codes," CDC epidemiologist Jane Harmon said. A Texas law prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors imposes a maximum fine of \$500 on merchants who sell tobacco products to children. About 3 million teen-agers are smokers and they consume nearly 1 billion packs a year. Fifty-three percent of adult smokers were daily smokers by age 18.

rette vending machines. Teen-agers bought 35 of the packs of cigarettes, or 83 percent, in restaurants. Fifty-nine percent, or 24 packs, were bought within a half-mile of a school. None of the business owners challenged the teen-agers making the purchases, according to the study. The Tobacco Education and Child Protection Act, introduced in Congress last November, would ban cigarette vending machines from places accessible to children. The legislation is still in subcommittee. Tobacco companies spend \$4.6 billion a year in advertising and promotions, but insist they do not target children. They support campaigns to discourage children from smoking, most notably spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to print placards warning teen-agers that buying cigarettes is illegal.



Blake Griggs/The Battalion

Step off on Hullabaloo

Members of the Fighting Texas Aggie Band Thursday for this Saturday's game against LSU in Baton Rouge, LA.