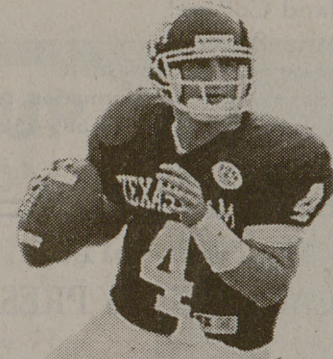


THE BATTALION



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"Serving Texas A&M since 1893"

NEWS BRIEFS

State senator to work for local book selection

AUSTIN (AP) — The fight over school textbook selection could move to the legislative arena next year, when one senator says he'll work to get the often controversial decisions handed back to local school boards.

The elected State Board of Education for the past 10 years has decided which books state money can be used to purchase.

But state Sen. Bill Ratliff, R-Mount Pleasant, said he will introduce a bill that would give local boards the freedom to use state funds to buy whatever books they choose.

"I think people need to understand that the decision already is in the hands of local districts," said Ratliff, chairman of the Senate Education Committee. "They have the option of buying whatever they want, they just can't use state money to do that."

In past years, issues such as inclusion of the biblical theory of creation in science books and human sexuality in health books have stirred the most controversy at education board textbook meetings.

Cuts increase risks at refinery, unions say

HOUSTON (AP) — Four workers' unions at the giant Exxon refinery in Baytown say maintenance cutbacks over the past year have led to an increased risk of deadly fires, explosions and chemical releases.

The unions, which represent all 1,850 refinery employees, made the complaints in an Oct. 6 letter to refinery manager Sherri Stuewer and in interviews with the Houston Chronicle last week.

Union leaders claim that inspection and maintenance of pumps and other important equipment have slipped noticeably.

"Each undone project, patch job and purposely neglected maintenance project puts another nail in the coffin of certainty which brings us closer to a major incident," the unions said in their letter.

Grand jury investigates slaughter of horses

DALLAS (AP) — A federal grand jury is investigating claims that wild horses are being sold to slaughter with the help of officials responsible for protecting them.

The grand jury in the Texas border city of Del Rio is looking into reports that officials with the Bureau of Land Management there are allowing people to acquire horses for \$125 through the agency's Adopt-A-Horse program — to sell to slaughterhouses for up to \$1,000.

Current and former bureau employees told The Dallas Morning News in its Sunday editions that agency officials interfered with efforts to uncover wrongdoing in the program.

Some current and former BLM officials said there has been no criminal wrongdoing. They call the investigation a misguided crusade by the bureau's law enforcement officials.

Democrats expected to support tax cuts

WASHINGTON (AP) — Outnumbered in Congress for the first time in four decades, Democrats are likely to lend significant support to Republican efforts to cut spending and taxes, reduce government and reform welfare.

But they will spend the next two years attempting to hold Republicans accountable for keeping the deficit in check, shielding student loans and other selected programs from the ax and making sure the wealthy aren't the prime beneficiaries of tax cuts.

They'll also try to hold the line on any attempts to enact a conservative social agenda.

"I'll vote for some spending cuts, sure," as well as work with Republicans on welfare, said Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., echoing the views of many Democrats.

At the same time, he said, "I think we have to stand for something. I think we have to have a social conscience. I think we have to be concerned about the working people."

Amount of enrollment interest prompts task force proposal

By Amanda Fowle
THE BATTALION

More people want to come to A&M than there is room for, so A&M System Chancellor Barry Thompson proposed Friday that the Board of Regents have a task force look into options to remedy the situation.

The task force will consider issues like making the admission requirements stricter, increasing tuition or expanding the current facilities to accommodate more students.

"I really think it is in the best interest of the University to form a task force to look in to this issue," Thompson said. "There are certain external forces that have to be looked in to."

The administration capped enrollment this year, and 2,500 qualified applicants were turned away from the University simply because there was no more room.

Dr. Sallie Sheppard, associate provost, said these students were referred to other A&M System schools.

Dr. Ray Bowen, A&M president, said enrollment was capped because of the increased cost of admitting more students.

He said adding 1,000 more students for just one year would cost the University more than \$6 million.

He said that amount does not include the costs of adding more dormitories, parking areas or library facilities.

Bowen said that 42 more faculty would have to be hired to accommodate the extra students.

"When you talk about increasing enrollment," he said, "you have to look at your resources."

He said the A&M faculty is currently teaching at

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Proposal requires good teaching skills for tenure

By Amanda Fowle
THE BATTALION

Faculty at Texas A&M System schools will have to meet new requirements, including good teaching skills and satisfactory peer reviews, to be granted tenure under a proposal that a tenure task force will make to the Board of Regents in January.

Dr. Manuel Ibanez, president of Texas A&M at Kingsville and head of the task force, said that teaching skills are often over-looked at large, research-based universities.

"Traditionally, we say if people have the degrees, they

have the qualifications to teach," he said. "That's not true, though. You have to learn how to be a teacher."

Chancellor Barry Thompson said many A&M faculty are lacking in the area of teaching.

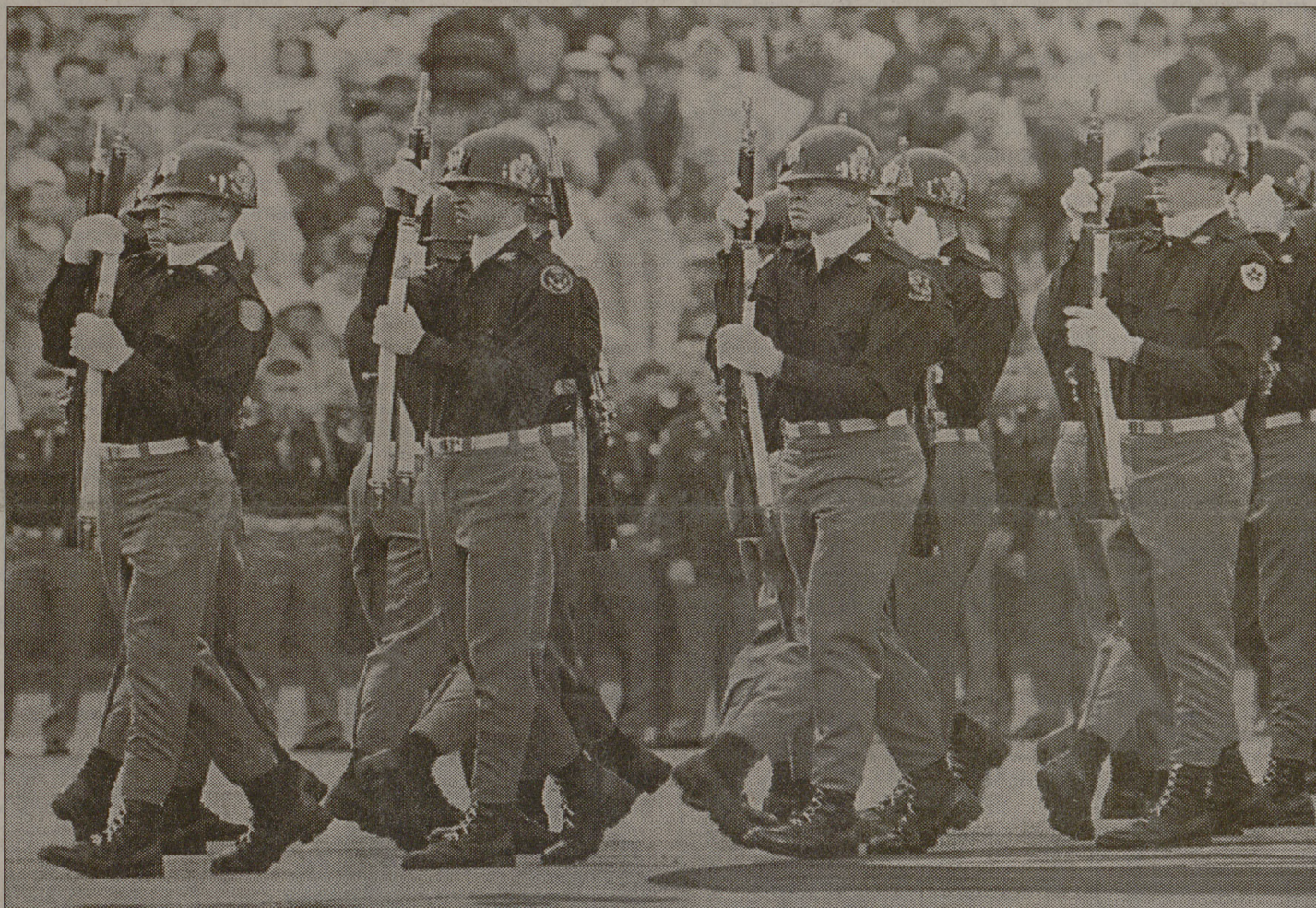
"Institutional leadership is probably the weakest area we have here," he said.

Thompson said he would like to see a group of the best teachers helping other teachers in the classroom.

"If you really want to impact teaching in the classroom," he said, "that will do it."

The task force also proposed

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Robyn Calloway/THE BATTALION

A precision team

The Fish Drill Team performs one of their exercises during the halftime of the A&M-TCU game Saturday.

Corps to urge cadet adherence to Aggie Code of Honor

By Lisa Messer
THE BATTALION

The Corps of Cadets is urging its members to make the Aggie Code of Honor a priority in their lives by holding an honor discussion Monday and Tuesday night that each cadet will attend.

Blaine Joseph, vice chair of education on the Cadet Honor Board, said the Corps needs to make cadets aware of the importance of integrity because it is the Corps' mission to produce leaders of character and competence for the nation.

"We've always had competent leaders come out of the Corps," Joseph said, "but not always moral people. This nation needs moral people."

"I don't believe there is complete ignorance of the Code of Honor in the Corps," Joseph said, "but sometimes there is a lack of concern about it. It's the same in the Corps as it is back down through society."

Joseph said the meeting will focus on the day-to-day dilemmas that cadets are facing now and will be facing after they leave A&M.

"If you sign out of CQ (call to quarters) to go to the library but go to your girlfriend's instead, that's a question of character," Joseph said.

"There are always going to be problems. For example, the Corps instills the buddy system in cadets, but sometimes that crosses the line between loyalty and honor."

Joseph said the Honor Board is looking for open discussions among cadets. After Dr. J. Malon Southerland, vice president for student affairs, addresses the cadets, the group will divide into battalions for scenario discussions led by faculty members.

Dennis Davenport, assistant Corps area coordinator and a discussion leader, said cadets need to remember everyone is subject

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Republican win could net Bentsen more influence

WASHINGTON (AP) — As most Democrats prepare to lose stature when Republicans take control of Congress next year, Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen could become a more valuable player, say analysts and interest groups.

His moderate political views, congressional experience and good standing with many Republicans could boost his influence, they note.

"Secretary Bentsen was a major force on Capitol Hill for a long time. He has well-developed working relationships on both sides of Capitol Hill," said Carol Cox Wait, president of the bipartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. "Having acquired that stature and relationship is of tremendous value today."

But the question is how long does Bentsen, now 73, want to stay in the Cabinet? Unlike former Defense Secretary Les Aspin or outgoing Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, there is no suggestion he would be forced to leave.

But practically since he was picked by President Clinton as a key member of the administration's economic team, it was widely assumed he would not serve the full four-year term.

Speculation about his departure was fueled by reports that his advice on crucial issues was not being heeded. And lately, Bentsen may have helped the rumors by toning down his exuberance when asked how he likes the job.

A year ago, when asked his plans, Bentsen said: "I am pleased with my position. I find it interesting and exciting. I have no intention of leaving."

These days when asked if he intends to retire, his stock response is, "You all keep asking me that question, and one of these days you're going to be right."

Also, Bentsen and his wife recently bought a million-dollar townhouse in Houston that is unoccupied. And, aides note, he might want to be closer to his six grandchildren who live there.

But, they quickly add, if the White House asks him to stay on the job to help deal with hostile forces on Capitol Hill, he is not likely to depart and risk appearing a quitter deserting a struggling administration.



Bentsen

Texas spends more for basics

Remedial college classes cost state \$127 million in 1994-95 school year

HOUSTON (AP) — Teaching Texas college students the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic is costing nearly four times more than it did six years ago, according to a report by state education officials.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board report says the cost of remedial college classes in the three R's exceeded \$127 million for the 1994-95 school year. That's up from \$35 million in 1988-89.

"This shows taxpayers are having to pay twice to teach kids basic skills. And underfunded colleges are being stretched even thinner."

— Nancy Atlas, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board chairman

The skyrocketing remedial course work isn't unique to Texas. Experts say spending has increased dramatically nationwide since the 1980s, though no national statistics are available.

In Texas, the increase is driven largely by the Legislature's 1988 imposition of the Texas Academic Skills Program, a mandatory placement test that identifies incoming college students in need of remedial help. Roughly a third of college freshmen fail the test annually.

Educating students who fall short is shared by large state universities, but about 85 percent of all remedial instruction is taken on by community colleges. The smaller schools now devote about 20 percent of their academic instruction to the cause, up from 5 percent in 1987.

"This isn't a development we've cheered," said Stan Calvert, executive director of the Texas Association of Community Colleges. "Community colleges would like nothing better than to get out of remedial education and teach college-level work."

Remedial courses are considered "developmental" and don't count toward a degree. They can range from math classes on fractions and percentages to basic reading courses and instruction in grammar and punctuation.

Nearly \$60 million, or 46.2 percent of the total spent on remedial courses in 1994-95, was spent teaching basic math skills. Writing classes took 32.9 percent of the total, while reading courses took

20.9 percent. The Coordinating Board report is being touted by some as proof that public schools are failing to do the job.

"Those numbers are a great indication of public schools' failed curriculum," said George Scott, president of the Tax Research Association of Houston. "They show we're spending money the wrong way."

Some public school leaders acknowledge the problem but say progress is being made by phasing out less rigorous courses and implementing college-preparatory classes.

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