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THE BATTALION **Editorial Board**

Belinda Blancarte, Editor in chief Mark Evans, Managing editor Jenny Magee, Opinion editor Sterling Hayman, Asst. opinion editor Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors. Contact the opinion editor for information on'submitting guest columns. or staff.

EDITORIAL **PRAYER IN SCHOOL**

Separation of Church and State should be upheld

School

Congress come January, and the issue of prayer in school has come into the spotlight again. The intention is to create a constitutional amendment which will designate a specific time for students to pray during school. Some legislators are calling for a "quiet time for reflection," during which students will be allowed to pray silently.

Others, such as soon-to-be Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, are pushing an amendment that would allow students to pray aloud.

The diversity among religions and the number of students who represent it may cause a problem too great for public schools to handle. Some religious practices are not a

prayer, but rather a vocal and ceremo-nial practice. Should such an amend-ment be placed into effect, it would have to accommodate all of these religious practices for students.

Some students may not feel comfortable in participating in such a prayer time, regardless of their religious beliefs. To those students, the proposed quiet time could make them uncomfortable. The product could be- ing their interests.

Republicans will be in control of come somewhat of a witch-hunt with those who choose to pray and those who do not pointing fingers at each other. This difference among religions may generate ridicule from those students who see other students'

religious practices as "abnormal." There is also an ideal in American institutions that there is a separa-tion of the Church and the

State. As public institutions are products of the State, such an amendment could encompass a violation of this ideal.

A more realistic and reasonable solution Prayer would be for students to pray before class, whether it is on school grounds or at home. They

nize student prayers on their

Bush should focus on prisons

Inmates must be educated before being released

eorge W. Bush was elected on a platform that stressed reform-

ing education and educational funding, increasing the power of the private sector and reducing crime. He seemed sincere; most of 'em do. He acted concerned, but who knows? Is he serious about governing the state?

I've got my fingers crossed. I want to believe him. I've even

got a couple of suggestions, at least about the crime issue. He wants to cut back on crime, along with every other citi-zen who cares about life, safety and the escalating costs of pris-ons and other corrective facilities. He wants to diminish the numbers of juvenile criminals. He wants prisons to truly rehabilitate those who are sent there.

Wow. He must have a lot of faith in the prison system. Rehabilitate? Did I hear that correctly?

He said Texas needs a governor to get rid of frivolous lawsuits that clog the courts and start filling the courts with criminals

"We want people to know they are responsible for their own behavior."

He said he will not allow sex offenders, murderers or car thieves out of jail on a probative sentence because it sends the

outweigh the rewards." It appears he believes that by send-

ing criminals to prison and keeping them there longer than the run of that silly "Lassie" remake, something can be done. Prison as rehabilitation? Prison as punishment? Consequences for actions?

He may just be right. Let's hope so!

One little teensy tiny hint — just a thought — sorry if I'm in-terrupting anything, Governor George, but you ought to make them go to school. University level classes. How can we pay for such classes, you ask? Well, they're already in place in lots of prisons. For example, Warden Velasquez of the Ramsey Unit II of the Texas Department of Original Institute accent that multiple of Criminal Justice says that multiple programs are offered at his facility, ranging from high school equivalency exams to post-secondary technical training. One can earn a college degree or a certificate from a technical school, no problem.

The only hitch is getting the prisoners to take the darned things. See, prisoners are required to work a specified number of hours per day (like 5-6). That's it. Maybe a little more when highway litter gets out of control. Your average prisoner has a lot of free time on his or her hands — time to mill around, watch TV, talk and nap, like some of us.

Too much idle time conditions a person to a non-working lifestyle. (Think of how you act now when your dad asks you help clear the table.) It isn't shocking that some prisoners don't want a job after being released or can't hold a steady one. After a heavy diet of "Charles in Charge" would you? Some of the brain cells may be hibernating, rusty even.

Real life skills haven't been practiced in awhile. Real life thinking has been replaced by a prison mentality that could frighten even the most hard among us.

Recidivism (the rate that released prisoners return to prison) is alarming. But not unbelievable. After living in a walled off community that runs very differently from the outside world, kind of like a Biosphere Hell bubble, inmates don't know al-ways know how to cut it when they leave. Inmates who complete college courses, however, have a bet-ter chance than the rest. A New Mexico study which came out this provide the content method is for the content of the content.

this year showed a 15 percent recidivism rate for those prisoners who had completed one or more college courses, compared with a 68 % rate for the general population. The Indiana Refor-matory reported that of the more than 200 prisoners who had earned a degree in a Ball Sate University extension program, none had returned to the reformatory

A Folsum prison study in the 1980's showed zero recidivism from college graduates compared with 55 percent rate for the general prison

Our prison systems operate like quicksand, sucking prisoners in and trapping them. It's time to treat prison as both punishment and "I will show that the risks of crime training for life outside of its walls.

three years of release from Folsom. Similar re-ports came from Alabama and Michigan. Similar reports could come from

population within

Texas if George W. Bush will try what I've suggested.

Maybe the prisoners who took those classes were more moti-vated and all that jazz. But it would do the others good to be exposed to the pursuit of intellectual ideas and rational thinking, or even plumbing techniques. Our prison systems operate like quicksand, sucking prison-

ers in and trapping them. Too many return too often. And we foot the bill. It's time to treat prison as both punishment and training for life outside of its walls. It's time for mandatory

post-secondary education for all inmates. George W. Bush — I hope you're listening — just between the two of us, I dare you to try it. I'll check back in a couple of years, okay? Until then I'll keep hoping for the best and offering suggestions.

W. Jason Moore contributed to the research of this column.

Erin Hill is a senior English major

Political system continues to change for the worse Politicians will not accomplish anything of

importance, will only cause more problems

Tave you noticed lately how weird the political climate has become? This eerie smile comes over various Republican faces as they stand and tell America how we are all in for a big change. Gives me the willies. Now

JOSEF A. ELCHANAN Columnist

they would all get together and ask politicians to sign a contract where they would attempt to reduce the deficit or not seek re-election. I bet you know how successful that was. My point is, these

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could arrive early and orgaquiet bow of the head and a silent prayer, but rather a vocal and ceremo-could then practice their beliefs in

privacy, without worry of alienation or ridicule. Furthermore, with our public school systems in such disarray, it seems more practical for legislators to

tackle the issue of school finance, rather than spending a lot of hot air debating prayer in school. These legislators should start better prioritizERIN HILL Columnist

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THE BATTALION • Page 9



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A&M can do more to promote recycling

I am writing this letter in response to a front page article in the Wednesday, November 16 edition of The Battalion entitled "Student groups work to form campus recycling program." As I picked up my paper this morning, I noticed two things. First, there were no ad inserts scattered on the ground surrounding the newspaper stand. Second, a person, sitting on a bench reading The Battalion, promptly stood up, folded his paper and chunked it in the nearest trash can. I wandered off, reading the seemingly ironic front page article.

Now wouldn't you think that members of RHA and the Environmental Issues Committee have considered every possible way to recycle? This campus is enormous and it wastes an indescribable amount each day.

I have a question. If "158 buildings are participating in recycling and 116 of these are on a regular weekly pick-up

cling bins were placed outside of the building on the pick-up schedule, reams of newspaper would be saved each day. Also, how much money does The Bat-talion make from those advertising supplements? If it is significant, the least they can do is try to get them printed on non-glossy, recyclable paper and provide recycling bins. I cringe every time I throw away my daily paper because there is nowhere else to put it.

Waste is unacceptable, especially at such a remarkable institution of higher education as Texas A&M University.

> Jennifer Koons Class of '98

Anti-gay letter reflects hatred, ignorance

This letter is in response to Jason McKemie's letter on November 18th entitled "Homosexuals ruin A&M's moral standards." In a semester where Regents have been convicted of unethical business practices, boosters are banned from football games, and racist inci-dents have abounded, the LEAST of all things that would degrade our moral standing would be the publication of an article about National Coming Out Week. In fact, the major thing that con-

schedule," why aren't there recycling bins outside of these buildings, particu-larly by the newspaper stands? If recy-ling bins outside of the cause you don't agree with them.

I can't stand hatred and ignorance like yours, but that doesn't mean I'm going to complain about it being print-ed. If you don't like the subject matter of the article, don't read it. It's as simple as that. If you feel so strongly about your moral convictions, then join the Battalion editorial staff and write about it intelligently. Don't just sit back and spew forth fragmented sentences of hate. Perhaps you are the one who needs to travel the 97 miles to Austin; I think the exposure to different people would do you some good.

If you had even included a logical argument against homosexuality in your letter, you may actually deserve some consideration, but as it stands now, I think you are the one that doesn't deserve to be printed.

> Ryan Hensley Class of '96 Accompanied by 12 signatures

The Battalion encour-ages letters to the editor and will print as many as style, and accuracy. Address letters to: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the au-thor's name, class, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, Texas A&M University College Station, TX 77843-1111 Fax: (409) 845-2647 E-mail Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu where's my ticket to Australia?

Well, ok, things could be worse. At least the president won't back-off on the issues. For instance Clinton said that he supports school prayer. Hold that, he's changed his mind, he's saying it's wrong to pray in school unless you are the adopted child of a gay soldier in the military. Hold that, he just said that he does not support homosexuals in the military, unless the cross-dress as Joan of Arc on Veterans Day.

Anyway, lets look at our new governor. Boy, he is a wonderful guy. Within a week, he has already firmly placed himself as a man of action, a real go-getter.

For instance, this concealed handgun thing is great. I mean, what kind of man would be a big enough wuss to not carry a a big-damn gun, like one of those 'pocket cannons' produced by good-old American gun companies. You know the one — it's the chromed, laser sighted monstrosity that makes Clint Eastwood cry like a baby. Or maybe we could all buy some of those Old West style 45's and swagger down Northgate, pushing those sandlewearing, pot smoking, long-haired hippies out of the way.

Heck, we could even issue handguns to those guys who need therapy for feeling like nobodies. You know the ones, the same guys that go out into the woods and cry to each other about how daddy dressed as a girl and then mommy spanked him. Now they could carry a gun and feel like real men. If some jerk tries to push them around, they can just blow a big hole in his chest. Boy, that Bush boy is a real stud. Another thing that amazes me is

how smart those new Congressman are. They figured out a way to lessen the tax burden of the public while continue to support present programs. It will be like Ronald Reagan again. Who gives a damn about this deficit thing as long as I get Social Security check when I'm old.

Well, I sure hope these political types can accomplish all this, but I do have my doubts.

My mom was part of this organization called Lead it or Leave, where

guys are probably not going to do anything that important, except cause some problems.

I have an old-fashioned American solution to put politicians in there place. No, not hanging, though it would work. No, I think suing them would be a good idea. For instance,

-Mr. Getmoney, you were a Congressman for two terms and then left to work as a lobbyist for the Japanese subsidiary Buyichi America. Is that correct?

-Yes, it is.

-And did you promise in your election to lower crime, reduce the deficit, help American business, help the poor; reduce unemployment, and to help reduce the trade deficit between the US and Japanese.

-Well, kind-off. I mean, I just said it because, well you know.

-No ,sir, I do not think we do. You will pay \$2,000,000 to the state for failure to meet your civil obligations."

Now, wouldn't that be great? But really, its all pipedreams, the ravings of a mind not used to the norms of the modern political climate.

Anyway, to be sure, the political climate in the US has changed considerably.

While the Republicans feel their way to a new role in the Congress and Senate, let us all hope for a few things.

First of all, that Bob Dole won't do anything, because he scares the living hell out of me. Second, let's hope that Newt Gingrich can get a better haircut, or buy a new hairpiece, whatever is needed. Third, for Pete's sake you dumbutt Democrats, find someone with some stinking ba... I mean guts. Sorry, this politically correct thing gets hard sometimes. If you have to, pay someone off to run for president. There has got to be someone that can act like they are in charge of the country for a few years.

Maybe the only real solution goes kind of like this — what do you call 1000 politicians at the bottom of the Pacific? A good start.

Josef A. Elchanan is a senior business management major