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## Democracy, warts and all, still has its moments

n 1940, Winston Churchill was an extremely frustrated man. Things did not look good on the home front, and to make matters worse, the American politicians were nervous about Franklin Roosevelt's Lend-Lease idea.

In a meeting with F.D.R., the prime minister expressed his exasperation. He declared, "Ours is the worst form of government ever created ... with the pos-

sible exception of every other one.' Churchill had a point. After leading his country to victory in World

War II – probably the last real bad-guy war we will have for a while – England showed her gratitude by voting Churchill out of office. Thanks for the support. It's not much easier here in America. Just

look at the budget battle on Capitol Hill. In order to balance the federal budget, the Medicare program must be cut.

Of course, the politicians who do the cutting may just be voted out by their less-than-grateful constituents.

Yep, democracy sure sucks. This "voice of the people" stuff has led to both corruption and scandal. The free press that goes with democracy is chock-full o' people who report only what they think is important; public opinion

If it weren't for democracy, we wouldn't have

DAVID **I** AYLOR for that matter, an artist formerly known as Prince. COLUMNIST

its absence. I had that chance a few years back. After my less-than-sterling freshman year, I decided to take a couple of years off from college and

I guess the easiest way to gain

hich came first, the truth or the law-

not have the tendency to sue each other with the frequency of the beat of their hearts.

The citizens of this great country flock

to the courtroom with such vigor that suing

could now be considered America's favorite

Almost nothing goes wrong anymore

without it being settled in a court of law or

with a monetary out-of-court settlement. Because of this propensity to sue, law-suits create a trickle-down effect on other ar-

For example, lawsuits and the threat of

being sued have greatly increased the costs of medical care. Many of these lawsuits are

based on emotions rather than facts.

These days in the grand old United States of America,

it seems that truth and hard

facts have no involvement at

problem if Americans did

all in legal proceedings. This would not be such a

eas of our lives.

an appreciation for democracy,

however, is to see the results of

spend them in the Philippines as a missionary. Nominally, the Philippines has been a democracy since it gained independence in 1948. Then came Ferdinand Marcos.

In the mid '70s, Marcos basically declared himself the democratically-elected president until he changed his mind.

In the '80s, the Philippine people set out on a

course to convince Marcos to change his mind.
This "People's Power" movement yielded a
great deal of optimism for the Philippine people. Even former Marcos supporters were determined to regain power through legitimate channels. Unfortunately, there was a price for the years

of autocratic rule. The Philippines, once known as "The Pearl of the Orient," now has one of the weakest economies in the Pacific basin and few short-

such wonderful words as "Watergate," "gerrymander," "liberalscum," "Whitewater," "New Deal," "Great Society" (or its resulting trillion dollar deficit) or,

fact that Coca-Cola made me feel better than the water, was a great appreciation for real live democracy in action.

Of course, if I would have known who our next president would be, I might have stayed in the jungle a tad longer.

I guess the easiest way to gain an appreciation for democracy, however, would be to see the results of its absence.

Democracy can be fun to watch, at times. For example, let's say we have a president who suddenly realizes that, in an effort to be all things to all people, he has little support from anyone ... and anyone starts to remind Mr. President who pays the re-election campaign bills.

Next thing you know (in this purely hypothetical exercise), our president starts to dance and dance and dance while someone else does the

Yes folks, it's MilliVaBilly ... or maybe Milli-

Anyway, back in non-hypothetical land, probably the best part of democracy is that I can make fun of almost anyone I want. And conversely, they can make fun of me.

Churchill was right, though. Democracy really

can cause problems ... at times. We have everything from scandals to gridlock to occasional inept leadership. But through it all,

Democracy, warts and all, works for more people than anything else we have ever come up with.

Nope, I wouldn't have it any other way. Despite the fact that often our own form of government gets in the way of our moving ahead even more rapidly, no society ever conceived has given so many the opportunity to go so far.

A good example of taking advantage of opportunities is our president.

Despite disagreeing with just about every facet of his existence, I do hold Clinton as an example of something that can really only happen here in America.

Hopefully, for my sake, someone else from a humble background will come along with a few

ideas that I agree with.
Until then, I plan to keep this democracy thing alive and well in my little corner of the world. Hypothetically speaking, of course.

David Taylor is a senior

awsuits stifle American ingenuity



THE SHOT HEARD 'ROUND THE WORLD

**EDITORIAL** 

LOSING SIGHT

The meaning of the Fourth of July

gets lost amidst fireworks and sales.

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorials 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.

Unfortunately, some Americans have lost sight of what

makes the Fourth of July a

forgotten that the signing of

the Declaration of Indepen-

dence was a solemn and

frightening experience for

the founding fathers.
When the Fourth of July

comes around each year, the

sights and sounds are not as

much of a fervent patriotism

and reverent remembrance,

department stores having

Fourth of July sales with bar-

gain prices is what makes it a

And while no one can ar-

gue the importance of sales,

it just doesn't seem to be

what Thomas Jefferson had

in mind when he helped

write the Declaration of In-

In ancient Greece, where

democracy was founded,

their standards of society en-

sured that close to 100 per-

cent of the Grecian citizens

voted and corrupt senators

would face death. Democratic

society has certainly come a

long way in the past 2,500

America seems to think that

but are signs of atrophy.

day of celebration.

dependence.

Americans seem to have

day worthy of observation.

Editorials Board

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years, yet less than 60 per-cent of Americans are voting

consistently and many who

do vote become dissatisfied

the Fourth of July with zeal and passion. The fireworks

people use to commemorate the day should reflect the

pride and fire they feel in

their hearts when they think

of the sacrifices made in free-

John Hancock, the first

igner of the Declaration of

Independence, signed the

document in oversized hand-

writing so that, "King George

(could) read it without his

who signed that document

were willing to stare death in

the face without flinching.

But today, people rarely get off the couch to perform their

be a reminder of the hard

work and constant vigilance

that comes with freedom and

liberty. One cannot forget

that government, "by the

people, of the people, and for

the people" means just that -

everyone must get involved.

The Fourth of July should

Hancock and the other men

dom's name.

spectacles.

democratic duties.

Americans should embrace

with their representatives.

This would not be such a problem if juries were not increasingly being made up of idiots. **Kyle Littlefield** Last week, the facts involving one of the largest product liability cases in the history

of the United States were revealed. What a shame the case has been settled for months. I am talking about the class action lawsuit involving 400,000 women and the manufacturers of silicone breast im-

The plaintiffs claim that it was the presence, not the rupturing, of their implants that led to a whole array of health problems. The complaints included localized pain, scarring and enlarged lymph nodes.

The major contention of the lawsuit, how-ever, was that 400,000 women had experi-

ALEX MILLER COLUMNIST

enced the symptoms of connective tissue disorders (such as rheumatoid arthritis) due to the presence

of silicone breast implants.
Upon realizing the potential magnitude of the lawsuit, the collective manufacturers of the implants, including the Dow Corning Corporation, decided to settle out of court.

The settlement involved the establishment of a \$4.23 billion fund to pay women involved in the class action suit

Now it seems that it may have been all for nothing. Last week, the New England Journal of Medicine published the results of a large-scale study that found no link between silicone breast implants and connective tissue diseases or their symptoms.

The study, performed by the Harvard Medical School, used data from a long-term health study of 87,501 nurses.

Of the nurses, 1,183 had breast implants, 876 of these were silicone-filled, and 516 had connective tissue disorders.

Only three of the 516 who had connective tissue disorders had breast implants, and only one of the three had silicone-filled implants. The results are so clear most health ex-

perts consider the issue dead. Also dead as a result of this case is the Dow Corning Corporation. It filed for bankruptcy in May due to its \$2 billion share of the settlement fund and pending lawsuits

involving breast implants. The problem is systemic from the top down. With the involvement of insurance companies and their willingness to settle out of court, large corporations hardly have an opportunity to clear their names or keep from becoming targets.

The widespread nature of civil lawsuits these days brings even the manufacturer of the smallest and most ineffectual components of a product under the umbrella of a lawsuit against that product.

As a result, many producers choose not to incorporate their materials into goods which may have the potential of being the subject of a lawsuit, but which would nonetheless significantly benefit scores of individuals.

This, in turn, slows the inventive process - the backbone of American ingenuity. Last and certainly not least are the attor-

neys and doctors involved in such litigation. Commonly in the past, plaintiffs in such large class action medical lawsuits have been referred to physicians by their attorneys. These attorneys first solicit their clients

and then often refer them to some physician who makes the diagnosis, which surprisingly affirms the attorney's contention.

This case is not necessarily an isolated incident. It seems that courts are willing to hobble industry on the mere assumption that individuals are wronged. The facts must be at hand to make an educated decision.

Personal responsibility must be reintroduced into society at the expense of get-rich schemes that threaten the productivity and inventive nature of America.
What should happen? This case should be

used as a clear example to help "weed out" other lawsuits with no scientific basis.

In addition, medical institutions should concentrate their efforts into finding the true cause of ailments. Strangely, what should happen rarely does, and industry will continue to defend its progress against everincreasing litigation.

If necessity is the mother of invention, the American lawsuit must surely be the under-

> Alex Miller is a senior bioenvironmental science major



## U.S. flag burning affirms freedom

To listen to debate currently being held on the floor of the U.S. Congress, one might conclude that we, as a country, are currently facing a dangerous epidemic which threatens to shake the very foundation of our government perpetrated by lawless and unpatriotic hooligans.
The epidemic? Desecration of

the American flag.
To argue that flag burning

and other acts of desecration are unnecessary acts of protest and are also disrespectful to the men and women who have given their lives in defense of it is understandable and true. But to argue that such acts be made illegal by way of adding an amendment to the U.S. Con-

stitution is as shameful as it is a waste of time and tax-payers

The First Amendment grants citizens the right to acts of free speech, which includes flag burning.

By amending the Constitution, our representatives will be, in effect, desecrating the power and authority of the Constitution, a national symbol much more worth fighting for than a piece of cloth.

One of the greatest freedoms we as Americans enjoy is the right to protest what we view as being wrong choices our gov ernment makes on our behalf. That freedom is a sign of a healthy and stable democracy

and should be protected.

The U.S. Congress should be ashamed of itself for even suggesting that an amendment be added to protect the flag.

It is an extreme act of irresponsibility that they threaten to weaken the Constitution in order to receive votes from an electorate which views people who desecrate flags, an event that rarely happens anyway, as radicals who are unpatriotic.

In actuality, many times it is the people who protest actions of our government who should be considered the most patriotic.

They are, after all, willing to subject themselves to public humiliation in order to make the country they love an even better place to live. What kind of country would we be living in if everyone blindly accepted the government's gospel?

Congress should allow citizens who legally purchase flags to exercise their freedom of speech, however disrespectful it is.

Chad Steven Cosper Class of '95

## Republicans add costs to students

On June 29, Toby Boenig wrote a fine guest column about the cuts in financial aid

and how it is going to affect the average student by making it hard for them to afford the Aggie experience. Further, he suggests that you write Rep. Jack Fields and demand that financial aid not be

cut. Fields has already gone on the record supporting the cuts to Unfortunately, the students here at Texas A&M University, in the rush to support the Republi-can Revolution and Contract with America, voted for Jack Fields last November by a whopping 92

These are the same students who are now screaming about increases in the student fees. To these students I have one

suggestion:

Quit whining. In the November elections,

they strongly supported Republicans (on both the state and national level) so they should quit complaining when their educational subsidies are cut.

They could be forced to pay fair market price for an education (ie. \$10-20 thousand per year for tuition) and soon will be forced to, if they continue to blindly support the Republican party.

> Dale Christensen Chemistry staff

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