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Underage drinking undergoes evaluation

The committee will study state and federal laws to consider changes to Texas state laws concerning underage drinking.

By Leslie New
THE BATTALION

Students under the age of 21 may find it harder to purchase and drink alcohol after a special interim subcommittee of the Texas Legislature completes its study of underage drinking and driving.

Appointed by Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock, the interim committee's main purpose is to make it harder for minors to drink and stiffen the penalties for those minors who are caught committing alcohol-related offenses.

The interim subcommittee will evaluate federal laws and

other state laws to consider as changes to Texas state laws concerning underage drinking.

The five-senator committee, including Senator Jim Turner, D-Crockett, will also study changes in laws and penalties concerning the purchase and consumption of alcohol by minors and the crimes of minor in possession and driving while under the influence.

"According to figures I have seen, over 130 Texas children and young adults were killed last year as a result of drinking and driving," Turner said in a press release. "These were senseless and unnecessary deaths that may have been preventable."

Bob Wiatt, Texas A&M University Police Department director, said he believes underage drinking is prevalent in the Bryan-College Station area, especially among college students.

"They'll use a fake I.D. and, if necessary, get an adult to buy the alcohol, then get smeared out of shape," Wiatt

said. "This (the interim committee) will put more teeth in the penalty phase."

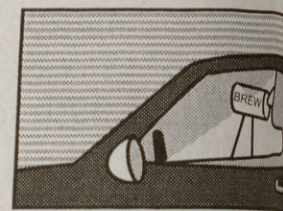
One of the points the interim subcommittee will study is increasing prevention and intervention programs that may reduce the occurrence of juvenile driving while intoxicated.

On campus, the Center for Drug Prevention and Education sponsors several programs that deal with underage drinking.

Helen Janss, assistant coordinator for CDPE, said an increase in the state programs would present a consistent message throughout the community.

"Something that might be increased is the enlisting of a more active and visible influence from the community to deal with the problem of alcohol availability to minors," Janss said.

Besides increasing educational programs, the interim subcommittee will consider establishing a lower legal blood-alcohol limit, increasing penalties for juveniles accused of DWI,



changing penalties for other toxication offenses and strengthening laws prohibiting the of alcohol beverages to minors.

Abram Trevino, a junior in the College of Business Administration, said he is not convinced that the committee's recommendations will have a dramatic effect on underage drinking.

"I think people are still going to drink," Trevino said. "It will affect new drinkers, but not those who already drink."

The interim committee will gather statistics and testimony from agencies and will hold a first organizational hearing in October. In September 1996, the committee will submit its recommendations to the Texas Legislature.

Freshmen fight fat with moderation, smart choices

Low-fat foods at the dining halls and a software program at the health center are available to students who are concerned about weight gain.

By Lori Young
THE BATTALION

Students need to make healthy eating choices to avoid the Freshman 15, those extra pounds students often gain once they go to college, said Dr. Jane Cohen, health education coordinator and nutrition specialist.

Cohen wrote in *How to Make the Food Pyramid Work for You* that students need to eat a variety of foods from all the different food groups to supply their bodies with the nutrients they need to stay healthy.

"By practicing moderation, you can get the nutrients you need without getting too many calories or too much fat or sodium," she said.

Annie Godwin, a graduate nutrition student, said when students come to college they are often deciding what to eat for themselves for the first time and may not realize they are eating extra fat and calories until the pounds start to build.

Monica Sanchez, a freshman mechanical engineering major, said she believes the Freshman 15 is a myth.

"I don't think it's as common as it used to be," Sanchez said. "There are just as many people who come to college and lose 15 pounds."

Honor Goodman, a senior journalism major, gained the Freshman 15 during her first year at A&M. She said she had not been on a scale in a year when she discovered she had gained extra weight.

"My suitemate had one of those digital scales," Goodman said. "I stood on that scale and almost had a heart attack. I thought my suitemate had rigged those scales as a joke."

Vickie Beck, Department of Food Services administrative dietitian, said students often make poor choices in the dining halls, but the department tries to offer a variety of foods to students.

"Every day, we have a light entree lined up next to the higher calorie main entree," Beck said.

Colin Obeirne, a junior accounting student, said the threat of gaining weight could influence some students to develop eating disorders.

"I know one girl who only eats once a day," Obeirne said.

Godwin said the personalities of individuals determine whether they will develop eating disorders.

"[Someone] is more likely to develop an eating disorder from trying to lose the weight than from the fear of gaining it," she said.

For students battling the bulge, A.P. Becktel Health Center offers a software program that will analyze a student's nutritional intake. Information on topics including nutrition and dieting is also available.

Students wishing to express their views on dining hall menus can contact Vickie Beck at 854-3005 or speak with a member of the Student Advisory Council, a volunteer student organization.

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