Presidential candidate seeks donations for NRA 'birthday gift'

Sen. Gramm is allowing the National Rifle Association to use his name and letterhead for a fund-raising campaign.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Phil Gramm, a Republican presidential candidate, is allowing the National Ri-

fle Association to use his name and title to solicit contributions and new

members on "U.S. senator" letterhead.

The gun lobby drafted, paid for and mailed a Gramm letter seeking donations as a "special birthday gift" for the NRA's chief lobbyist.

Public interest and gun-control

Public interest and gun-control groups denounced the strategy as ethically questionable. But aides to the Texas lawmaker defended it as a com-

mon fund-raising technique.

Gramm's undated letter praises the NRA's executive vice president, Wayne LaPierre, as "my friend ever since I came to Congress."

Noting that LaPierre's 45th birthday is next month, Gramm asked recipients to give a friend or relative a gift membership in the NRA "as a special birthday gift to Wayne."

He called on supporters to help the

NRA, whose membership has declined, to recruit 100,000 new members by

year's end.
Gramm's letter was sent to NRA members on stationery marked "Phil Gramm U.S. Senator" with an eagle seal on top. The envelope also bears a "Phil Gramm, U.S. Senator" legend.

However, despite its official appearance, the letterhead is not actually Senate stationery and the seal is not

an official one. Both the gun lobby and Gramm's office said the letter was produced and mailed by the NRA.

Federal law forbids soliciting or receiving political contributions in a federal building.

However, the House and Senate ethics committees have advised law-makers not to use their office telephones, stationery or other resources in fund raising.

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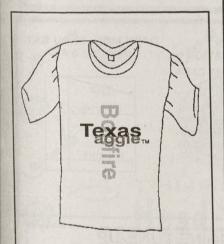
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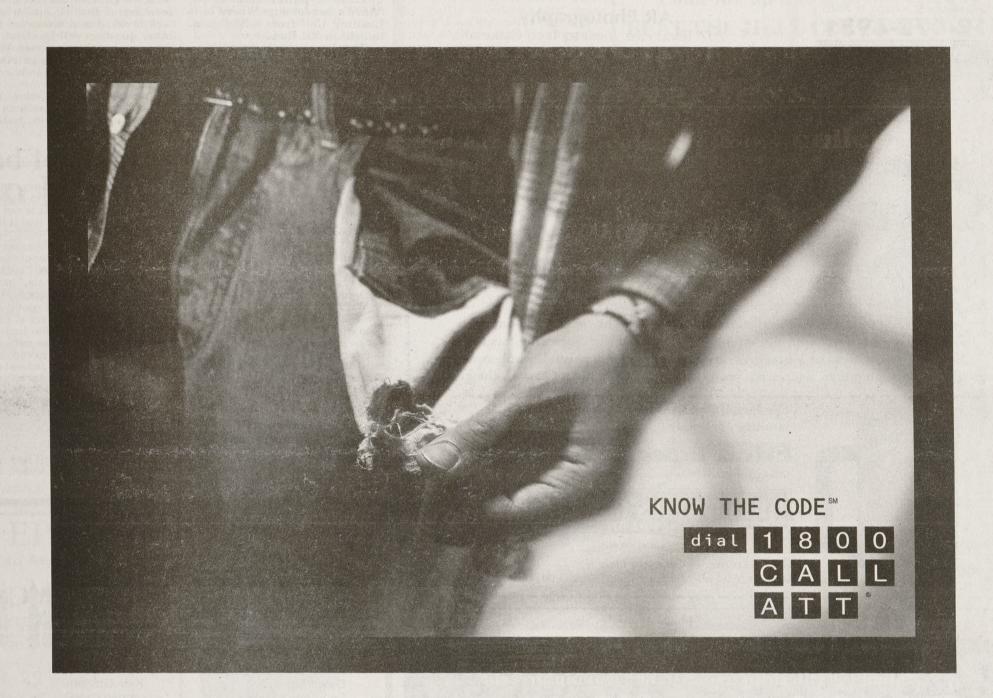
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