

Supreme Court puts officer safety first

WASHINGTON (AP) — Police can order all passengers — not just the driver — out of vehicles stopped for routine traffic offenses, the Supreme Court said Wednesday in a ruling that officers' safety outweighs passengers' privacy.

"Regrettably, traffic stops may be dangerous encounters" for police, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist wrote in a decision hailed by police groups.

The 7-2 decision in a Maryland case said ordering passengers not suspected of wrongdoing out of a car is only a "minimal" intrusion on their rights.

"Danger to an officer from a traffic stop is likely to be greater when there are passengers in addition

to the driver in the stopped car," the chief justice added. He noted that 11 police officers were killed and more than 5,700 were assaulted during traffic stops in 1994.

The two dissenters, Justices John Paul Stevens and Anthony M. Kennedy, said officers should be allowed to make passengers get out of a vehicle only when they actually suspect possible danger.

"The Constitution should not be read to permit law enforcement officers to order innocent passengers about simply because they have the misfortune to be seated in a car whose driver has committed a minor traffic offense," Stevens wrote for the two.

SCONA

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Longfield said students do not understand such issues as the Hopwood case. She said affirmative action will affect them when it is time to apply for graduate school in Texas or look for a job.

"The biggest problem is that a lot of people perceive this (SCONA conference) to be for the people that want to be informed," Longfield said. "It's not. It affects everybody in our daily lives."

Twenty-three of the 130 delegates are from A&M. Each college at A&M selected representatives to attend the conference.

"We try for a mix of 75 percent [from] other universities and 25 percent [from] A&M," Currie said.

Christy Moon, vice-chair of foundations and corporations and a junior political science major, said the SCONA committee is trying to attract more non-A&M delegates to have a wider range of opinions.

"We're trying to bring in as many people of diverse groups as we can," Moon said.

Martha Middleton, member of the public relations committee and a freshman biochemistry major, said she decided to join the SCONA committee after she picked up a brochure at the MSC Open House.

She thought one of the most important things she could do was learn from other people's ideas.

"It sounded like a good idea, bringing in other people and press their views, not just A&M," Middleton said. "I heard A&M is very sheltered at times."

The C-Span network will air the address on its Saturday evening show "American Perspectives March." The SCONA conference has reports from the roundtable discussions on its web page.

Currie said this year's conference has more national recognition, more non-A&M delegates than years past.

RESEARCH

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Foxworth said the rankings indicate what institutions to court with for research.

"Those companies really look at Texas A&M whenever they work in agriculture, engineering and biotechnology," Foxworth said.

The majority of federal funding A&M receives for research comes from competition against other search institutions, he said.

Sawtelle said A&M is competitive in bidding for research funding.

"The rankings indicate that we've won proposals," she said.

Foxworth said the research structure and size of A&M are significant factors in the high rankings.

"You've got to have the money and the facilities to do the research," Foxworth said. "If you're doing physics, that's big bucks. You're going to need many accelerators, things like that."

The highest A&M has ranked fifth, in the 1993 and 1994 fiscal years. In the last ten years, A&M consistently has been ranked in the top ten.

Dr. David Allen, an aerospace engineering professor, researches strength of structures in airplanes and highways detecting cracks in the structures of airplanes.

Allen said one-third of all aircraft failures are related to structural failures.

"If you can predict [the crack developing] in a structure, then you can tell the designers to strengthen the structure."

Allen said improving the structure of airplanes involves riveting, bolting or welding.

"If you go to D/FW airports, you'll see patches all over the planes," he said.

Along with safety benefits for passengers, Allen said his research could save airlines money.

"The big payoff is that if we make aircraft... last longer, it's money," he said.

Other research being conducted at A&M includes investigating cancer cell growth, eliminating childhood malnutrition in Mexico and removing carcinogens from ground water.

"Texas A&M, because of its cultural and engineering base, is really works on pretty practical applications," Foxworth said.

HANDBALL

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The A&M Handball Team won 11 championships in their first year and competed in various tournaments this year.

A&M placed second in combined men's and women's competition and second overall women's competition at the national tournament last year.

The top seed in the women's singles category is Priscilla Kojin of A&M. Kojin, a senior marketing major, placed second in last year's national collegiate tournament. She has prepared for this year's competition practicing year-round and competing in four other tournaments.

Kojin said she likes having home advantage and looks forward to the tournament. "First seed is a lot of pressure, but I usually like to be the top seed," she said.


Kojin also will compete in women's doubles.

The top seed in men's singles is Tyler Hammel of Portland, Oregon. David Chapman, the reigning Handball World Champion, will not compete because of a foot injury. Chapman is a student at Southwest Missouri State University. Nikki Nelson, a junior wildlife and fisheries sciences major, competes for A&M in women's singles. She made it to the semifinals in the novice category last year.

"I like being a part of the team," Nelson said. "Handball is a great way to recreate."

Lazell Payton, who works member services at the Rec Center, said there is excitement at the center about the meet.

"The students have worked hard and have done a great job preparing for it," Lazell said.



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