



THE BATTALION

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DWI bill calls for stricter penalties

Proposed Senate Bill 35 would lower the legal blood alcohol content from 0.07 to 0.00 for minors in Texas.

BY BENJAMIN CHENG
THE BATTALION

Under-age driving while intoxicated will be a costlier offense if a "zero tolerance" bill proposed before the Texas Legislature is passed.

Senate Bill 35 creates a separate offense for minors driving under the influence. It lowers the legal blood alcohol content level from 0.07 to 0.00 for minors and stiff-

ens penalties for all alcohol-related offenses by minors.

The bill also increases the fines for minor in possession offenses, and it suspends the driver's license of minors who commit DWIs until they are 19.

Texas leads the nation in the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities among minors. Dr. Maurice Dennis, a health and kinesiology professor, said minors represent 7.3 percent of licensed drivers in Texas, but account for 13.3 percent of all DWI fatalities.

"It's more evident that they're over-represented in traffic fatalities," Dennis said.

Senate Bill 35 is one of several DWI bills being considered by the Texas Legislature. An act passed by Congress mandates that states pass a "zero tolerance" law by October 1998 or they will lose federal highway funding.

Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission Sgt. Laban Tascano said alcohol vendors are responsible for verifying the age of those who possess and purchase alcohol.

"If they allow you to possess, it's against the law," Tascano said.

Kristi Fitzgerald, a freshman general studies major, said she gets alcohol through friends who are of age and friends who use fake driver's licenses.

Fitzgerald said some local clubs are lax in preventing minors from possessing and consuming alcohol.

"The people that work there know it goes on," she said. "They just turn the other cheek."

A Blinn freshman, who declined to be identified, said he buys alcohol and enters clubs with a fake driver's license.

"It's easy to get in with a fake ID," he said.

"I don't think they check pictures. They'll just look at the (birth) date."

Tascano said employees of alcohol vendors are often careless about checking the age of minors.

"That carelessness will eventually cause someone a problem," Tascano said.

Swifter prosecution and stiffer penalties against offenders and vendors are needed to reduce MIP and DWI offenses, Tascano said.

Dennis places the blame for minor in possession offenses on the minor.

"No one holds a gun to their head and makes them drink," he said.

Dennis said minors are more at risk when they drive while intoxicated because they have less experience driving and drinking alcoholic beverages and they take more risks.

"It (the bill) is not picking on young people," Dennis said.

Tascano favors the provision in the bill that lowers the BAC for minors to 0.00.

"Why did they put 0.07 when if you're under 21, you're not supposed to drink anyway?" Tascano said.

Dennis said Senate Bill 35 combines enhanced laws with a behavioral change education program.

"If the bill goes into law, without an education program, it's not going to be as effective," he said.

Dennis said similar "zero tolerance" bills in other states have been effective.

"Maryland ... experienced an 11 percent decline after implementation of a zero tolerance law," Dennis said, in a press release, "and up to a 50 percent decline when coupled with public education programs."

Army of God' claims liability for bombings

ATLANTA (AP) — The FBI received a letter Monday claiming responsibility for both the abortion clinic bombings in Atlanta last month and Friday's bombing at a gay and lesbian nightclub.

The letter, purportedly from a group called the Army of God, was mailed to the Reuters news agency Saturday and was turned over to the FBI on Monday.

FBI spokesperson Jay Spadafora would not comment on the authenticity of the letter. Robert Easter, Reuters' domestic news editor in Washington, D.C., described the letter as "handwritten, 2 1/2 pages long, and unsigned."

The letter threatened "total war" against the federal government, said abortion would not be tolerated and promised future attacks on homosexuals. It also sought to set up a system so that claims of responsibility could be confirmed after future bombings, Reuters reported.

"We're taking it seriously. We're looking into the validity of the letter and the claims that they're making," said Pamela Swanson, a spokesperson for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

The Army of God is "more of a

manual than a group," said Mary Ann Mauney, research director for the Center for Democratic Renewal, a group that keeps track of terrorist groups.

"It was put out by an anti-abortion group and targets how to destroy abortion clinics. It gives instructions on how to make bombs," she said.

A nail-laden device exploded Friday on a rear patio area of The Otherside Lounge, injuring five people. Police found a second bomb shortly after arriving at the scene. It was detonated with a remote-control robot.

In Washington, President Clinton addressed the incident, telling an audience at a fund-raiser that everyone must fight hate crimes.

"I'd like to say the recent bombing of the gay nightclub in Atlanta reminds us that this work is not over," Clinton said. "That was wrong and we have to stand against those things."

Authorities continue to investigate possible links between the nightclub bombing, the two blasts at a Sandy Springs abortion clinic on Jan. 16, and a bomb explosion at Centennial Olympic Park last summer.



Ryan Rogers, THE BATTALION

Come on Down!

Martha Arzayus, a freshman general studies major, models the items up for bid in *The Price is Right* booth at an interactive display sponsored by CBS at the MSC Monday afternoon.

Wisdom of Experience

Thompson reflects on career goals, challenges

BY KEVIN CUMMINGS
THE BATTALION

Dr. Barry B. Thompson has spent his life applying his dedication to honor, compassion and duty to his goal of improving education.

Thompson, chancellor of the Texas A&M University System, is in charge of 10 universities, eight state agencies, more than 22,000 employees and 65,000 students.

Thompson began his educational career as a public school teacher, but quickly moved into administrative positions. By the age of 25, he was principal of Dalhart High School. He went on to hold the positions of chief academic officer and vice president for academic affairs at East Texas State University and president of Tarleton State University and West Texas A&M University.

Building on his history as a public educator and administrator, Thompson ended a short retirement to assume a role as head of the Texas A&M University System in 1994.

He said he was willing to give up retirement because he could help the System.

"The reason I took it (the job) is because they talked about duty," he said. "I felt it was my duty. It's worth 80 hours a week of my time to try to elevate the system to the level it deserves, and I believe in five to 10 years we will be there."

Named chancellor of the A&M System at a time when its reputation was suffering, Thompson took initiative to turn things around. He has since developed the Center for Leadership in Higher Education, a program intended to identify potential leaders in the A&M system and provide them with the training and education necessary to serve A&M in the future.

He has overseen the establishment of the Texas Higher Education Coalition and reorganized the system administrative and general offices.

Thompson believes success can be found through trying to make a positive impact on society. He began his long career in education in an attempt to make a difference.

"The modus operandi is always the same — people who are honorable, people who believe in giving something back to society — tend to do better than those who don't," he said.

"Success is not driving a Lexus, or a Hummer, or even a Dodge diesel truck. The bottom line is making a difference."

Thompson said the secret to success, in his role, is increasing the performance of everybody involved.

"I try to create an environment in which good peo-

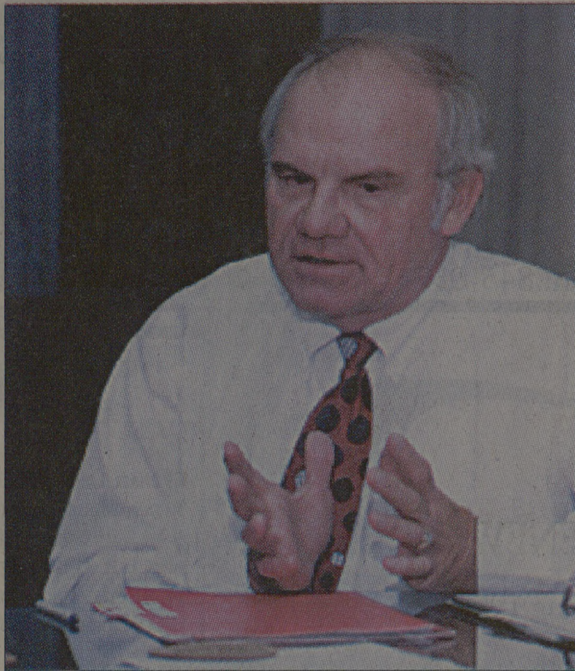


Photo provided by: Chancellor's Office

Dr. Barry Thompson, TAMU System chancellor, uses his experience as a public educator to raise standards and implement change.

ple feel they have some ownership — where they get recognized for high performance — and then you just keep raising the standard," he said. "I classify myself as the head cheerleader. I just try to motivate people."

Kathy Harris, a communication specialist in the chancellor's office, said Thompson's application of his intelligence for the public good makes him successful.

"Dr. Thompson is one of the most inspirational people I've ever met, and it's an honor to work with him," Harris said. "When your leader is passionate about what he believes, and what the A&M system is doing for Texans, it's easy to be passionate yourself."

Thompson's coworkers, however, may not be the ones who know him best. Thompson works in College Station five days a week, then he and his wife steal away to his beloved ranch in Pine Wood, just two hours away.

There he raises Herefords, appaloosas, and quarter horses, and with the help of his surroundings and his neighbors, he defines himself.

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Spring candidates file for positions

Student leaders anticipate new methods of selection

BY LAURA OLIVEIRA
THE BATTALION

Student leader positions are up for grabs and the spring elections will bring changes to the selection of yell leaders, Resident Hall Association positions, and possibly Student Senate seats.

Jason Jaynes, election commissioner and a junior computer science major, said the number of candidates who want to run for yell leader positions is not likely to increase because of the implementation of run-offs.

"A lot of people who are running for yell leader were already going to run," he said. "There might be a couple of people who are encouraged because of the run-offs, but I have not seen an increase."

Student Senate is pushing for the senate restructuring bill, which will

reduce the number of Northside, Southside, and off-campus seats. The bill will be voted on Wednesday and, if passed, also will give caucus leaders more authority.

Chris Reed, speaker of the Student Senate and a senior finance major, said decreasing the Senate openings and centralizing power within the Senate will force candidates to rely less on the number game and do more hardcore campaigning.

"Senators will have to go out and talk to student organizations and the student body, find out what their constituents want and then solicit the student's opinions back to the senate," he said.

RHA has added two positions, vice president of programs and vice president of administration, that will assume the duties of secretary and treasurer to the ballot.

Filing began Monday and will continue through 5 p.m. Friday. Interested students can fill out forms in 143 Koldus Building. Candidates must pay a fee and collect signatures to declare candidacy.

Last year's general election brought approximately 25 percent of the student body to the polls. Jaynes said in comparison to other universities such as Arizona State University and California State in Sacramento, voting participation at A&M is high.

"They (other universities) are lucky to get 5 to 10 percent to vote in their elections," he said. "They are always impressed by the number we get to vote in our elections."

Jaynes said A&M has a large voter turnout because of student participation and interest.

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► Off-Campus Aggies

Members alter voting procedures

BY MARISSA ALANIS
THE BATTALION

Weak leadership experiences and a disproportionate number of off-campus students voting for the Off-Campus Aggies officers have prompted OCA to change its voting procedures.

Executive committee members of Off-Campus Aggies have decided not to allow the student body to vote on its four officer positions during the student body general elections in March.

Instead, the 23 member executive staff will have an OCA panel of two advisers and three outgoing members select the officers.

Usually, A&M students elect the president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer of OCA through the general student body election voting ballot compiled by the election commission.

Candidates for the OCA positions now must first submit an application and then undergo an interview conducted by the OCA panel.

David Shilson, OCA president and a junior political science major, said in elections last year about 850 students voted for the officers when there were only 400 dues-paying members. He said the dues-paying members were not adequately represented.

Amanda Green, OCA student relations director and a junior political science and journalism major, wants this year's 300 dues-paying members to decide who is going to be in charge instead of allowing non-members to vote.

"This is just a way to ensure and to empower our members to have their choice," Green said.

OCA is a social organization with members who pay dues, similar to how a fraternity or sorority operates, she said.

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