

Designate a Bus services stop

Shuttle program looks for funding and to make improvements

By REBECCA TORRELLAS
THE BATTALION

The Designate a Bus Transit shuttle bus program stopped its services this semester to find funding for the fall semester. Matthew Kenyon, a former student of Texas A&M who now lives in Houston, began DAB last fall as a non-profit venture to reduce the number of accidents caused by drunken driving.

Ian Soares, a DAB system vol-

unteer with Kenyon and owner of SOS Defensive Driving, said DAB was an experiment last semester and went above and beyond what was expected.

He said other universities in the Big 12 want to get DAB at their schools.

"It was very successful," Soares said. "Over 700 people used the bus. It did what it was supposed to do."

Soares said he and Kenyon want DAB to have its own funding to pay for its drivers instead of relying on volunteer drivers from Brazos Transit.

Soares said they also want to get more buses.

Last fall, there were only three buses, with a fourth added later as a "demand response" bus.

Soares said he hopes to have at least 10 buses for the fall semester.

Clint Amy, a senior animal science major, said DAB needs improvement.

"The buses took too long to come around and some people didn't feel like waiting for them," Amy said.

Jesse Bryant, a freshman general studies major, knew DAB was

running, but never had to use it.

"I'm usually [the] designated driver and [I] drive my friends home," Bryant said. "There wasn't a need to use it."

Soares said the improvements are not final because they must be approved by the city of College Station.

He wants students to realize DAB is doing everything possible to improve the program.

"We want people to realize we're still here," Soares said.

A Balanced budget proposal voted down

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an all but fatal blow, Sen. Robert Torricelli announced opposition Wednesday to the Republican-drafted balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. He said the proposal could hamstring future generations confronting a military crisis, recession or a need for federal construction.

"We write not for our time but for all times," said Torricelli, D-N.J., who has supported similar constitutional amendments in the past. When it comes to making a change in the 210-year-old Constitution, he added, "good is not good enough."

Elected to the Senate last November, the New Jersey Democrat thus became the 34th Democrat to oppose the measure, enough to ensure its defeat.

Republicans rushed to attack Torricelli for breaking a campaign promise. "He has thumbed his nose at the people of New Jersey once and for all," charged Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott.

At the same time, Torricelli's decision confronted Lott with a choice between offering concessions in hopes of gaining the elusive 67th vote in support of the measure — or watching it go down

to the narrowest of defeats next week and trying to pin the blame on the Democrats.

The White House issued a statement in which President Clinton said he was pleased with Torricelli's decision. He added it was now "time to get down to the hard work of balancing the budget."

The proposal, a cornerstone of the Republican congressional agenda, would require a balanced budget by 2002, with a three-fifths vote of the House and Senate to run a deficit thereafter. It cleared the House two years ago, when the Republican revolution was in full flower, but fell one vote shy of passage in the Senate.

This time, it bogged down in the House, where some Republicans flinched in the face of Democratic charges that it could threaten Social Security benefits. That prompted the GOP leadership to try to push it through the Senate first.

Republicans argued the measure was needed to instill fiscal discipline

in a government that has run deficits for nearly three decades. To dramatize their point, they stacked budget books several feet high on desks in the front row of the Senate, one thick volume for each of the years the budget has been unbalanced.

Within the new Senate, where all 55 Republicans support the measure, it quickly became clear that the swing votes were held by four newly elected Democratic senators.

Two of them, Max Cleland of Georgia and Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, announced their reluctant support over the past several days.

Sen. Tim Johnson of South Dakota declared his opposition last week, even though he, like Torricelli, had supported a similar amendment only two years ago. And shortly after Torricelli's announcement, the Republican National Committee disclosed it would begin airing radio commercials in South Dakota on Thursday saying Johnson "broke his promise."

Landrieu's announcement on Monday left Torricelli squarely in the spotlight — a position clearly

welcomed by a newcomer who has moved forcefully to establish his presence within his party and the Senate.

He conferred privately with senior Democratic colleagues on Tuesday, spoke by telephone with Clinton, delivered a formal maiden speech in the Senate at dinner time and met with Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, in a room behind a darkened chamber immediately afterwards.

The New Jersey Democrat voted for similar amendments twice before, most recently in 1995 in the House when he was preparing for his Senate candidacy. He told reporters that he had done so to get the attention of Presidents Bush and Clinton at a time when deficits were approaching \$300 billion. In the interim, he said, the deficit is closer to \$100 billion, and added, "I could no longer claim that I was using this to make a point."

At a news conference held shortly after the New Jersey Democrat spoke, Hatch stepped before the same microphones and read aloud from last year's campaign statements in which Torricelli stressed his support for an amendment.

Toricelli dribbled his decision out slowly during the day.

"We write not for our time but for all times."

Sen. Robert Torricelli
D-N.J.

FDA wants simpler labels on drugstore remedies

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans confused about which over-the-counter medicine is their most potent but safest choice are getting some relief: Simpler labels on non-prescription drugs.

The Food and Drug Administration proposed an order Wednesday that would have drugstore remedies bear the same simplified labels that foods do. It's an effort to turn the baffling medical jargon now crammed onto bottles into advice easily comprehended by laymen.

The labels were designed so consumers could tell at a glance the proper use of an over-the-counter drug, its side effects and

when to see a doctor.

Take Rite-Aid brand Tri-A-Phen, a drugstore brand antihistamine and nasal decongestant for cold or allergy sufferers. Today, consumers must wade through lines of tiny print to learn the drug is dangerous when taken with certain antidepressants.

The FDA put a sample label on the bottle that says up-front and in larger print, color-coded to catch consumers' attention: "Do Not Use" if you also take those antidepressants and "Ask a Doctor Before Use" if you have heart disease, high blood pressure and a list of other diseases the drug could impact.

Until now, this labeling has been done voluntarily by a small number of companies in the \$18 billion nonprescription drug industry. Those who used the more consumer-friendly labeling felt it helped their marketing.

Thompson Medical Co. led the way in 1995 when it relabeled Hemorid hemorrhoid medication to highlight a health warning — don't use Hemorid if you also take blood pressure medicine or antidepressants — previously buried in fine print. The heartburn medicine Pepcid AC went an extra step, offering an illustrated insert explaining just what heartburn is and five ways to

avoid it without drugs — information patients would get if they went to a doctor instead of opting for over-the-counter relief.

The FDA said getting clearer information on all nonprescription drugs is important because consumers try treating health problems themselves four times as often as they consult a doctor.

The agency is giving the public four months to comment on the proposal. If the rule then becomes final, over-the-counter drug manufacturers would be allowed two years to use up their old packaging and put the new labels on all of their products.

Violent juveniles may be forced to watch autopsies

Juvenile and county authorities say that this punishment may curtail further criminal acts by the adolescents.

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Violent juveniles and young repeat offenders soon will be forced to confront the consequences of violence in a graphic way that officials hope will discourage further criminal acts.

Within two months, juvenile and county authorities will require certain offenders to watch hour-

long autopsies. They want to jolt young minds with images of the damage inflicted by gang members and criminals.

"We want to take them through the process and show them the aftermath of their violent activities, and actually, how they might end up one day if they continue to play in those violent activities," said Tim Byrne, administrator of the El Paso County medical examiner's office.

The plan is to have the viewings available as an option to judges when sentencing juveniles.

The viewings are a "scared-straight" approach to dealing with violent criminals similar to pro-

grams in California, Byrne said. In Texas, a Houston judge ordered a teen-ager last year to watch an autopsy as part of a probated sentence.

El Paso police Lt. James Chesshire, a gang unit investigator, said he thinks the autopsy program will have an impact on some youngsters.

"These kids see so much violence, whether it's on TV or around the family, that when they go out and shoot at somebody, they don't really think about the consequences," Chesshire said. "Perhaps seeing an autopsy might be just what they need to wake them up."

People going through a similar program in Los Angeles often show

a change in attitude and demeanor, said Craig Harvey, chief of the Medical Examiner's Operations bureau in Los Angeles.

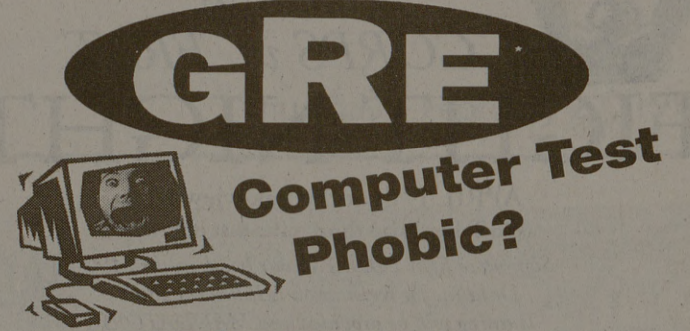
"I think they finally realize that they are not as invulnerable — that bad things can happen to them," Harvey said.

But two self-described El Paso gang members said the program won't necessarily affect everyone.

"A very violent person, even if they give him the autopsy presentation, will continue to do what he wants," said Junior Gandara.

"If they are hard-core, they aren't going to be affected," added Tommy, who declined to give his last name.

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