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Law and order

Drew Nixon prepares as first Texas Senator to serve term from behind bars



ROBBY RAY
columnist

Texas State Senator Drew Nixon is about to try something which has never been done before in the state of Texas: serve his constituents from behind bars. Senator Nixon, who was recently convicted of soliciting prostitution and weapons charges, was sentenced to 180 days in jail and fines totaling \$6,000.

Despite this, he has indicated that he will continue to serve as state Senator, saying that "the honoring of [my] obligations...must continue through this tribulation." People need to honor a man so willing to stand by his...um...convictions. The state should declare a Drew Nixon Day. The scheduling would be tricky, though, because it would have to be on a day after his release from prison so he could attend the festivities.

It all began earlier this year when Nixon was caught on tape negotiating for sexual services with an undercover Austin policewoman. When he was arrested, it was found that he was also illegally carrying a handgun. Convicted of two misdemeanor charges, he now faces the impending reality of serving jail time. As Texas law currently stands, neither of these convictions would prevent him from continuing his service in the Senate.

One has to wonder, though, if his new point of view should be represented in Congress. For instance, who, if not Sen. Nixon, will watch out for the welfare of

the under-represented group now dubbed "Incarcerated Americans" (who sometimes prefer to be called the "Freedom Impaired")? This is not just about physical abuse. As people have recently seen, the press takes care of that. This is much more serious. Who on the outside will speak for "Incarcerated Americans" when their cable TV privileges are unjustly suspended? Who will make sure that they get the proper nutrition for their body building programs? These are the kinds of questions that need to be addressed by the Texas legislature. These people cannot be adequately represented by someone who has never been "on the inside".

Those members of the other party who have been repeatedly calling for Nixon's resignation are being unfair to the thousands of "Incarcerated Americans" in the state of Texas, as well as insulting a truly honorable man. It would be a gross injustice if mere partisan bickering were to deprive thousands of Texans of their representation in the legislature.

With this expansion of representation in the Texas Senate, one has to wonder what new and exciting issues Sen. Nixon would be able to bring to the floor. For instance, would he push for the legalization of prostitution? Or perhaps he would propose the repeal of the conceal/carry law in favor of a more lenient statute.

He would be in a unique position to set an example for the felons of the state, showing them that just because a person is convicted of a crime and incarcerated does not mean that that person is no longer able to maintain ties to the outside and remain a functioning, contributing member of society.

As a matter of fact, this could be the birth of a radical new theory of economics. Instead of keeping felons confined in cages like animals with nothing to do but work out and work on their next round of appeals, people should allow them to keep their jobs and continue to contribute to society. After all, they can't be taxed if they don't make any money. This theory could drastically reduce the

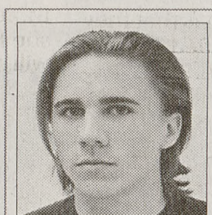


national debt as hundreds of thousands of new workers nationwide began to add their "contributions" to the federal tax base. Some are even suggesting that Nixon be allowed to serve his time in small increments on weekends. This strategy could also work well when applied to the general prison population. This way there would be no loss of productivity whatsoever from the incarceration of

these workers. The bottom line is that there are too few politicians nowadays that can be truly held up and admired for their trustworthiness and virtue. Citizens need more Senators like Nixon, servants who will boldly break the law and then boldly face the consequences.

Robby Ray is a senior speech communications major.

Satellite technology shows American aggression



MASON JACKSON
columnist

Defense Secretary William Cohen, attempting to prove that just because a man is a secretary doesn't mean he isn't hardcore, gave the go-ahead last week for the army to fire a laser beam at an Air Force satellite.

A source close to this writer (about 35 feet away) exclaimed, "Whoop, bout stinkin' time we kicked the Air Force's butt — thinking they all high and mighty with their fancy air-o-planes." The test is designed to help develop satellite defenses against lasers used by potentially hostile nations, possibly the Canadians, or maybe even those Denmark people — I hear they're all hopped-up on goof balls.

Such a use of lasers is not prohibited by the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, though the 1987 Innerspace Treaty does strictly prohibit Martin Short and Dennis Quaid from appearing in any more movies together.

The test also isn't outlawed by the 1972 Anti-Balistic Missile Treaty, which prevented President Reagan's "Star Wars" Plan in the 1980s. It must be noted that this same treaty failed to stop Reagan's "rip off the working class" Plan of the same decade.

The real (and admitted) reason the military wants the capability to disable satellites in space is to deter other nations from seeking such a weapon for use against the United States.

So if the United States builds this laser that can destroy satellites, no other country will want to build one because we were the first to get the technology.

Just like the time Americans invented nuclear weapons and nobody else wanted any. Yeah.

Obviously this is asking to start another arms race, just like the one in the 1980's between inner city youth and Charlton Heston.

But just how necessary is this test? We're talking about protecting satellites (commonly found in outer space) from extremely powerful lasers (the kind you can't get from Sharper Image.)

This means the aggressor would have to be another country, yet the only people crazy enough to attack the United States are terrorists (which are not countries.)

That's right, we're bad. Even when we attack a country like Iraq under the guise of "interested third party", they barely fight back. So who exactly in this day and age are we protecting ourselves from?

Not to mention there are other, less antagonistic, ways of protecting our satellites than developing a weapon to destroy them. And don't think this test is anything other than proving we can destroy a satellite. The test could have been easily duplicated in a laboratory and without a press release.

And under the heading of "Things used less often than _____", here are some options for defending satellites: install a form of armor against high-energy bursts, make the circuitry redundant, make them smaller and thus harder to hit, and develop quick-relaunch capabilities to minimize the amount of time a satellite is down.

Not that losing one satellite will cripple the nation — the United States has around 220 of the 500 satellites now operating in space.

But since they are going to go ahead with the test anyway, I have one suggestion: Please, please, forget about the weather satellite and aim at the one that relays the signal for "The Jenny McCarthy Show."

Mason Jackson is a senior marketing major.

New form of punishment serves to benefit society



JOHN LEMONS
columnist

In the game Monopoly, the get out of jail free card is a small, orange piece of cardboard. In Johnson City, Tenn., however, the get out of jail free card may be your liver.

In news that can only be considered weird, Judge David Brand of Johnson City, Tenn. is offering reduced sentences to criminals who agree to donate organ donor cards. The innovative move presents an unconventional, yet positive approach to punishment. Offering perpetrators the opportunity to donate organs addresses a serious problem, and it might even work here at A&M.

This organ donation scheme is not a judicial game of "Let's Make a Deal." Perpetrators do not have the option of offering a kidney for less time in the slammer. Brand offers them this deal — people placed on probation for misdemeanors can get up to 12 days of community service removed from their sentence if they become organ donors.

The organs for community service bargain does have its detractors, though. Heidi Weinburg of the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee does not approve of the deal.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Weinburg said, "I'm not sure it is the appropriate role of a judge to say, 'We will decrease community service if you

donate you organs.' It doesn't appear to fit into the appropriate role of punishment and rehabilitation."

Leave it to the ACLU to try to deflate a genuinely good idea. Substituting organ donation for community service is appropriate because it is a community service. Organs are in short supply.

According to the United Network for Organ Sharing, as of Oct. 1, there were 37,468 people registered for kidneys, 9,085 people registered for livers and 3,820 people registered for hearts. Considering that there were only 11,099 kidney transplants, 4058 liver transplants and 2,342 heart transplants in the United States in all of 1996, this constitutes an organ shortage.

Brand's style of justice offers a unique solution to addressing the United States' organ needs. Moreover, there is even a rehabilitative aspect to organ donation.

Frankly, some people need to learn to share, and there is no better way to learn that lesson than by sharing one of the few things that one can truly call their own — their internal organs. Too many criminals spend their lives only taking from society. Perhaps, it is time to compel them to give.

Besides, the organ donation option is exactly that — an option. The deal is purely voluntary. Defendants do not have to agree to become organ donors. It could be worse. In some countries, criminals are punished by removing appendages. Donating a kidney after one dies beats living the rest of one's life missing a hand.

Furthermore, this punishment philosophy could be effec-

tively applied other situations. Consider, the Senate campaign fund raising investigations. Sure, Bill Clinton probably violated the Pendleton Act by soliciting contributions over the phone from the White House. But, the law is old and has not been enforced in years. Perhaps, a fair punishment, after impeachment, would be to compel Clinton to become an organ donor. Of course, Republicans would demand that Clinton donate his organs now.

The philosophy would work exceptionally well here at A&M. Believe it or not, Aggies do occasionally break University rules and regulations, which leaves them subject to the student judicial process. Certainly, Aggies could agree to sign organ donor cards as part of their sanctioning. Medical science, though, may not be interested in the livers of students found guilty of underage drinking.

Another option could be to have students agree to donate blood for their violations. After all, there perpetually seems to be a blood mobile on campus begging students to drop off a pint. Surely, they would appreciate some business from the student judicial system.

Brand's organ donation scheme offers a positive solution to an often overlooked problem. It is a practical solution that allows criminals to make what is perhaps the only valuable contribution they can make to society. Besides, criminals are just putting those organs to waste.

Silly criminals, organs are for law-abiding citizens.

John Lemons is an electrical engineering graduate student.



MAIL CALL

God guides humans toward true fulfillment

This past week we have seen quite a few examples of taking a little bit of truth and then twisting it to our convenience. One column referenced how Christianity notori-

ously is the "Religion of Hypocrisy." Given that all Christians are imperfect and have sinned, this could be true. The Crusades were referenced as an example of this hypocrisy. True again.

This truth highlights how imperfect we are as humans and Christians. This further justifies the need for the love of a perfect God to forgive us.

However, it is much easier to create our own convenient standard and ignore our imperfection. If God really is perfect, complete and lacks nothing, then wouldn't it make sense that God has nothing to gain and everything to give. I believe this is the definition of love. If we are designed in God's image as The Bible states, then it is no sur-

prise that I am more fulfilled when I do something for my wife than when she does something for me.

My children, the products of the most intimate expression of love, are treasured beyond belief, loved beyond logic they are and the greatest source of fulfillment ever experienced. The procreation of this love I have depicted physically and spiritually could not occur with a homosexual couple.

By accepting Christ and his omnipotence in your heart, you share in the power of His gracious love. Only by this love are we enabled to actually live beyond a human standard and experience true fulfillment in life.

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