

New census proposal violates Constitution

The capital is hot with accusations these days. Many lawmakers insist publican attempts at impeachment will cause a constitutional crisis. Removing a president from office, they argue, overturns the will of the American people.



DAVE JOHNSTON

New controversies will arise. Who figures the estimates? How? Which areas will be counted and which estimated? These are important decisions when funding and political representation hang in the balance.

Statistical estimates are widely accepted in many fields. Political polls usually interview about 1,000 likely voters and extrapolate the views of the general population. The polls are generally accurate — usually plus or minus 3 percent.

Of course, the problem is even 3 percent could radically affect the boundaries of a congressional district.

Population estimates use models to project what the actual population most likely is. Unfortunately, there are no existing accurate models of the American population to use as a basis to estimate census data. The proponents of the new method point out the inaccuracies of recent census numbers — inaccuracies that would work to hinder estimation.

Census estimators must either replicate these inaccuracies or take an educated guess at how to correct the miscounts.

This educated guess is the unconstitutional part.

This guess would doubtlessly become a partisan tool. The party in control of the census bureau will estimate in their favor.

If any office in Washington needs objectivity, it is the census bureau.

By the same token, the office needs to take every possible measure to guarantee accuracy in their final report. Plus or minus 3 percent does not qualify as accuracy.

The solution to the problem is a meticulous, more accurate survey of the entire American population.

Since members of Congress on both sides of the aisle agree there are only a few segments of the population that may be miscounted, the census bureau should devote more care and even greater resources to those areas.

The Constitution calls for an enumeration of the population every 10 years. Instead of using estimates to get around the constitutional imperative, census takers should follow the requirements more closely — counting everyone.

Dave Johnston is a senior mathematics major.

SGA problems demand campus political parties

At this moment, I am preternaturally calm about all this, having passed beyond anger earlier this evening into a kind of Zen state of consciousness, utterly unable to wrap my mind around the absolute stupidity of something like this for more than two minutes at a time.



CHRIS HUFFINES

By morning, this will have worn off.

"I'm looking forward to it immensely."

There have been days when students here at Texas A&M have discovered something the Student Government Association has done, and have begun to identify with this quotation by J. Michael Straczynski.

The Student Government Association, despite its multiple beneficial roles within the University, bewilders most Aggies with its seeming reality handicap and anti-student attitudes.

For most average students, the Student Government Association is a near-powerless figurehead, and an ugly, unlucky one at that.

There is, fortunately, an elegant, inexpensive and blissfully administration-free solution to the problem that is the Student Government Association: the introduction of political parties into student elections.

This will not only keep the important aspects of the group, like its role as the student's voice to the administration, but will also make it better and much more effective.

This action would have the advantages of bringing competition to the Student Government Association, creating more accountability for elected candidates, easing the financial burden on students who run, as well as creating a coherent, long-term policy within the organization.

Before discussion of the advantages really gets rolling, it is important to note political parties in this sense does not mean the College Republicans or the Aggie Democrats.

These two groups serve both their national parent organizations as well as the students. That kind of divided loyalty is what caused the current national partisan mess in the first place, and it would be foolish to advocate importing that same brand of chaos to Aggieland.

First, political parties would create some much-needed competition. As Charles Darwin pointed out so many years ago, increased competition weeds out the worst and elevates the best.

In the arena of student government, as parties came into being, social Darwinism would step in and the parties would be

forced to constantly work to put out better programs. To do anything else would risk losing student support and hitting an evolutionary dead-end.

Political parties would also ensure competition for student senate positions.

The number of unfilled seats in the Student Senate sometimes runs into the double digits. These seats could easily be filled if there were parties to put forward candidates.

Second, the parties would create more accountability. Nobody in Aggieland knows who is involved in the Student Government Association, which makes accountability difficult. Today, aside from the Student Body President, the Aggie on the street would find it easier to sing the t.u. fight song at cut than dredge up the names of their student senators.

It is much easier for a student to remember which party he or she agrees with than to remember the student government member he or she likely did not even vote for in the first place.

In addition, accountability would be increased because parties would increase the absolutely pathetic voter turnout A&M currently wallows in.

The more students vote, the more students will call or write student government officials to keep their action in line with student wishes.

Third, political parties could very easily raise money from students, local businesses, advertising and other areas to help lower the hit to the pocketbook of those Aggies who do run for Student Government Association offices.

This would widen the election field to include the best candidates, not just those good candidates who can shell out enough cash.

Finally, political parties would help create a coherent, long-term policy within student government. Currently, no student senator holds office for more than a few years.

Political parties could very easily hope to accomplish goals whose lifespan is longer than the academic career of those students who are working to achieve it.

The Student Senate could advance policies similar to (and hopefully better than) Vision 2020 and could examine student issues over a longer period of time than could any one student government official.

Aggies have allowed themselves to be shortchanged by this organizational vacuum for long enough. This problem can easily be solved by the 2000 elections. It is time to make a change for the good of Aggies and Aggieland.

Chris Huffines is a junior speech communication major.

Democratic members of Congress have proposed a new method for national census. A method courts have already laid unconstitutional.

The proposal suggests counting some of the American population and using statistical theories to estimate the remainder.

The proposed changes in census-taking does violate the Constitution. Even if it did not, it would create too many problems to take effect beneficial.

There are several reasons for recommending the new plan. Census does not come cheap. It takes a significant amount of manpower, postage and tabulation to count the American populace. The process is long and expensive.

The census numbers are always subject to intense controversy. Some segments of the population are difficult to tally. The census, for example, provide a unique challenge to census takers. Under the proposed system, the homeless population could be estimated.

But this opens a whole new can of worms.

Core curriculum offers Aggies little flexibility

Texas A&M's undergraduate catalog states that the University's core curriculum is established to provide for breadth of understanding.



ANDREW BALEY

The catalog goes on to say that the core curriculum acts to enhance and broaden the University's education of providing thorough preparation in each student's academic major.

This line of reasoning does not make sense. Engineering majors do not benefit from humanities courses such as theater arts. History majors do not benefit from science courses such as chemistry. Instead of providing a thorough preparation, the core curriculum does nothing more than create obstacles for students and waste money and time.

The 48 hours of the core curriculum — 59 if you missed foreign language and computer classes in high school — is too many. The benefits of spending the first

two years of a college career in the core curriculum is that there is more time for a student to choose a major and the few classes that do pertain to one's major help for future classes.

The hours students spend in core curriculum classes only cause grief and worry. Two years of college adds up to cost a good deal of money. If students had the choice, many of them would skip the core curriculum entirely and proceed into their major classes. The problem with this, and the reason it does not exist, is that employers probably would not want 20-year-olds in the workforce.

Along with requiring too many hours, the core curriculum is pointless in many aspects. Students who are enrolled in mandatory classes that do not pertain in any way to their major or interests do so in aggravation. This aggravation is justified when a semester is spent studying for a course outside of a student's major and interest.

What good comes out of this? This attitude is evidenced in discussions of upcoming tests. Whenever a professor admits a certain section of material will not

be on the test, students immediately discard it from their minds and notes.

The only "breadth of understanding" applicable to situations like these is that administrators should grasp and understand the fact that many core classes only help in developing short-term memory capacities.

Unfortunately, many core classes do not come close to "broadening the preparation" of one's major. Will a philosopher be a better philosopher because he or she took a geology lab?

There is little doubt that person would be a better philosopher if he or she had had more philosophy courses, instead of the geology lab that is irrelevant to the student's major course of study.

Many students have no interest in the social sciences; other students could not care less about mathematics or logical reasoning. If this is the case, why should they take them?

Students pay their own tuition, and they should not be at the mercy of the University.

Additionally, as long as students cover the basic classes of their ma-

ior, why should they be restricted in their choice of electives?

There should be more flexibility in the current core curriculum. Business calculus will not help a journalism major, so a journalism major should have more freedom to choose those classes that will enrich their education and skill level.

A general, diverse education is hard to achieve as a whole because certain students will demonstrate a lack of effort in certain subjects.

Students attend college so they can gain knowledge and skills in order to obtain a job in the future.

There are not many useful jobs requiring workers to remember pieces of information and quickly discard them, never to be used again.

It is said the purpose of college is to instill in students the ability to think. This is a noble goal, but aggravation, apathy, and a lack of choice breed discouragement, not analytical thinking.

Andrew Baley is a junior political science major.

MAIL CALL

Student leaders support bloc seats

In response to Andrew Baley's Oct. 14 column:

We would like to thank the Class Councils for creating and marketing such a successful concept with the Maroon Out shirts.

We would also like to thank each organization that sat in a "bloc" at the football games and wore maroon, including chapters from the three Greek councils, some residence halls, business fraternities and other non-Greek groups.

Baley's column is right on target when congratulating Aggie fans on their contributions to the A&M victory over Nebraska. However, in the column, he implied the Corps of Cadets, Yell Leaders and Greek organizations were the only groups to stand as a group at the games.

The truth is there are several other organizations already out there sitting as a group outside of the Corps of Cadets and the Greek system.

Simply standing together does not stop Aggies from yelling together or wearing maroon.

In the Greek Bloc, virtually every person was wearing maroon, and most were wearing the official Maroon Out shirt. Chapters went out and bought the

shirts in bulk, and those who did not make it in time wore the only other maroon shirts they had, even if they had letters on them. Gig 'em!

Scott Lovejoy
Class of '97
Interfraternity Council President

Adrian Leday
Class of '98
PanHellenic President

Kristen Kirby
Class of '99
Panhellenic President

Tase Baily III
Class of '99
Corps of Cadets Commander

Laurie Nickel
Class of '98
Student Body President

Aggie appreciates student honesty

Here is just another reason I'm glad I attend A&M.

I am a freshman chemical engineer, and like most other freshmen, I have tons of classes in Heldenfels Hall.

Last Thursday, I lost my wallet in room 100, the largest room

on the first floor. I did not just lose my wallet, but my cash, credit card, phone card, blank checks, driver's license, student ID, Aggie Bucks, meal plan and other things.

Within two hours of losing my wallet, I received a phone call from Professor Drosd because one of her students had turned it in to her. When I picked it up the next day, not a thing was missing.

My experience just proves the honesty, integrity and thoughtfulness present in the average Aggie. As an Aggie myself, I hope I can live up to this standard.

Thanks for the student who returned my life to me.

Anthony Garza
Class of '02

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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