

For richer or poorer

Tax code levies 'marriage tax' on couples, should be changed to avoid penalizing for holy matrimony

Face it: getting married is all about money. From the small fortune the potential groom plunks down for the diamond engagement ring to the enormous sum spent on the actual wedding and reception, marriage starts off as a reason to waste money.

And thanks to the United States tax code, marriage continues to be a reason to waste money, long after the actual nuptials.

Over 21 million couples in America are victims of what some call the "marriage tax." The marriage tax affects unions in which both partners earn approximately the same amount of money.

Because the the income tax is based on how much income a person earns and the marital status of that person, a married couple that earns \$31,500 per person ends up paying an extra \$1,271 dollars, altogether, in comparison to a single person who makes \$31,500.

Does that sound fair? Not at all. The problems began when Connecticut businesswoman Helen Kellems lobbied Congress in 1969 to end the extra tax unmarried women had to pay.

Noting the number women who were unmarried after World War II due to the shortage of potential husbands, Kellems asked, "What do you do if you can't get a husband? Should you be taxed?"

No, but then again, a woman should not be taxed if she does get a husband.

In an effort to stem the unfair penalty tax faced by unmarried women, Congress ended up coming up with a different problem: the marriage tax. Currently, a single person takes a higher standard deduction (tax exemption for supporting himself or herself) than each member of a married couple does.

Yes, many people have said that when two people get married they become one unit, does that really translate over to the tax code?

Married people are just as entitled to their income as single people are. Just because two people are brave to take a giant, courageous leap forward and get legally mar-



MANISHA PAREKH

ried does not mean they should receive a tax penalty.

After all, aren't there enough penalties to getting married as it is?

Furthermore, while the original tax change was meant to help women, it also ended up hurting women. In some cases, the woman's added income causes the couple to fall in a higher tax bracket — one they would not be in if they were single.

The solution is clear: end the marriage tax. Currently, a bill is making its way through Congress to do just that. Some members of Congress are opposed to this bill because, if passed, it would reduce tax revenue an estimated \$144 billion over five years. This reduction has some congressional members up in arms.

And while \$144 billion is not pocket change, one thing must be kept in mind: that money belongs to the taxpayers, not the government.

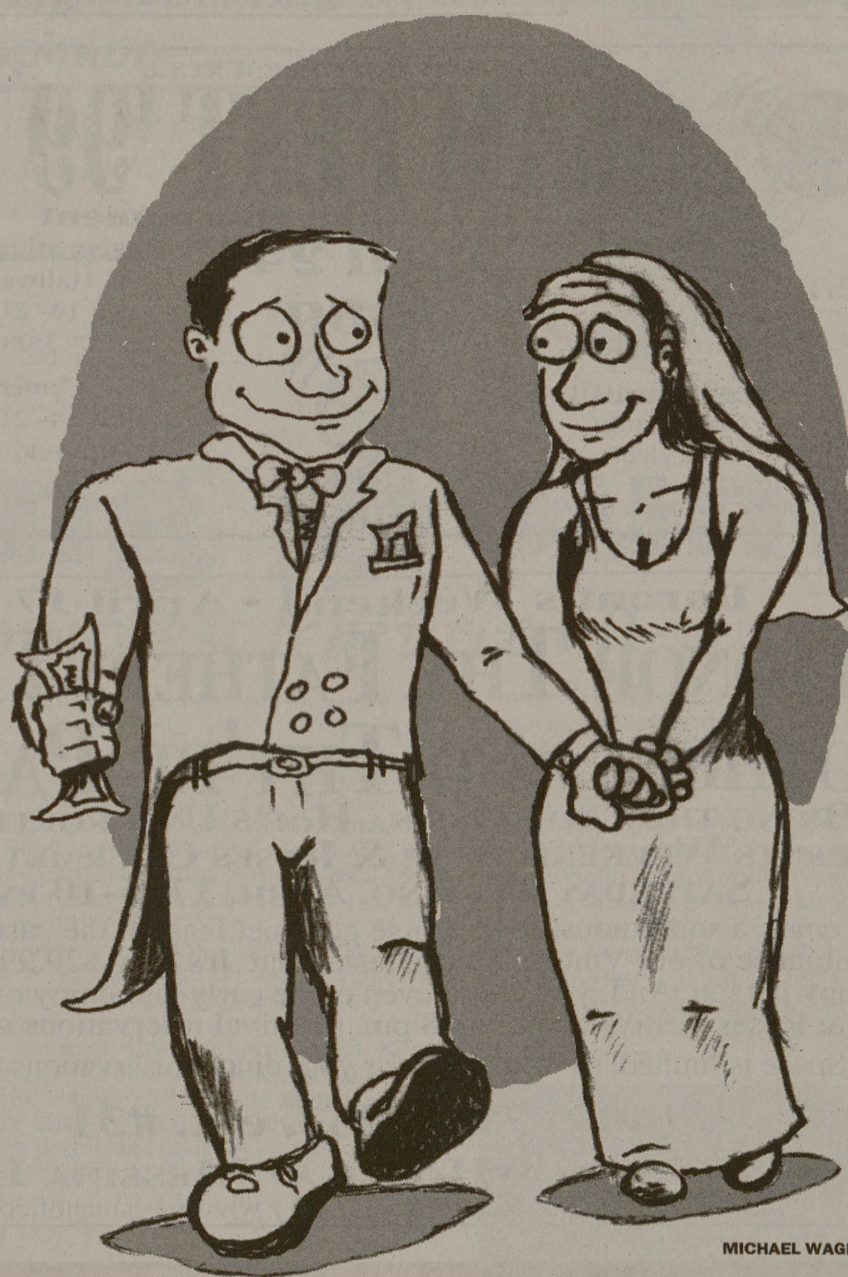
And according to U.S. Senator John Ashcroft of Missouri, the amount reduced from the federal budget adds up to less than one-third of the projected budget surpluses for the next five years. How can the government lay claim to money that it does not even need?

That money belongs to the married couples who are being unfairly charged for not staying single. The government has no claim to it, and it is only right for lawmakers to change the tax code to keep married couples from being penalized.

It is obvious the tax code is in need of serious reform. From various loopholes to the Internal Revenue Service, there are numerous problems that need to be fixed. The marriage tax, however, is one problem that can be taken care of without too much red tape and headaches, so why not start there?

Marriage is about two people forming a bond and vowing to love and care for each other for eternity. It is a time to reflect on the future and plan for happiness. It should not be about pulling out the tax forms and figuring out whether it actually pays to get married.

Manisha Parekh is a junior psychology and journalism major.



MICHAEL WAGENER/THE BATTALION

Line between community's abstract art, citizen's junk very thin

Last week the division of the City of College Station ordered the Community Enhancement Division pay a fine to my residence.

It seemed that I was in violation of a city ordinance which states that inoperative vehicles cannot be left in front of one's residence for more than 45 days. The penalty for violating this ordinance: a fine of \$800.

However, the Community Enhancement Officer would not believe me when I told her that this was not a pile of junk in my front yard, collecting dust, rust and raucous looks. Instead, it is what I call "Failed Attempt at Ford Ranger Restoration."

In other words, art. Personal art, but art nonetheless.

Officer Friendly still insisted that it was a pile of trash and proceeded to write me the ticket. However, she did tell me that if I wanted to have my art registered and recognized by the City of College Station that I should speak with the Parks and Recreation Department and The Arts Council



ZACH HALL

of the Brazos Valley. Apparently they handle all the art in town.

Not wanting to give-in to the City of College Station Community Enhancement Nazis, I decided to head to the College Station Public Library to do some research on both art and junk. I found both topics on the same shelf.

Upon turning into the parking lot, I happened to notice what appeared to be a pile of twisted construction metal formed into the unrecognizable shape in front of the library.

I asked a librarian what it was, but she was unable to give me an answer, saying that it was put there by the city.

I was unable to find the information needed, so I decided to go to the Bryan Public Library via Texas Avenue.

Halfway to Bryan, at the intersection of New Main and Texas, I noticed what appeared to be aluminum stalagmites coming out of the ground. A double take confirmed that it was indeed a pile of something and must be related to the pile of metal in front of the library.

Suddenly a curious ambiguity occurred to me. My "Failed Attempt at Ford Ranger Restoration"

could not be deemed art because a city ordinance to protect the community atmosphere and property tax value of my neighborhood said that it was illegal. But similar scraps of metal placed around town and deemed "abstract art" were not considered illegal and, instead, were considered attempts at enhancing the public standard of living and to broaden the public mind set.

Calls to both the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley and the Parks and Recreation Department confirmed that these were indeed "abstract" works of art designed to enhance the community atmosphere.

Being the fledgling artist that I am, I did not dispute their contention that community art will lead to greater community involvement in the arts. The recent performance of "Les Miserables" is testament to this.

However, when the only art that is displayed around town on public land is abstract art, one has to question whether the Arts Council and Parks and Recreation Department are serving the entire community's interest.

After all, art is generally an expression of the artist's own emotions and thoughts, and not

everyone is going to enjoy or even like a certain piece of art.

Therefore it is imperative that the Arts Council and The Parks and Recreation Department make strong efforts to balance the artistic view of the community.

In fact, Dave Romei, executive director of the Arts Council said that the Arts Council is responsive to the public input, and if the public demanded more traditional art, the council would comply. But he also said the responses to the Arts Council's "Calls For Art" have only yielded abstract art.

Therefore, it is imperative for other community artists, like myself, or perhaps even those who consider art evil to attend meetings or provide input to both the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley and the Parks and Recreation Departments of College Station.

I have already made plans to attend the next meeting; I see visions of "Failed Attempt at Ford Ranger Restoration" gracing the headquarters in front of the College Station Police Department.

Zach Hall is a senior philosophy major.

MAIL CALL

Graphic displeases Battalion reader

I was very displeased to see the graphic published for the column "Can't we all just get along?" on Monday.

Is the artist of that picture a member of the Corps of Cadets or just a worshipper of that sector of our campus. There is no need for picture that shows a cadet apparently beating up on a non-reg.

I happen to be a happy non-reg that wouldn't even consider being a member of the Corps of Cadets. For those that like the Corps, fine. It adds a lot to our University, and helps many of those people to succeed in life.

But seeing that picture while reading an article entitled "Can't we all just get along?" doesn't make sense. Poor choice of pictures, folks.

Tim Comeaux
Class of '99

Voting not matter of choice for Corps

In response to Christina Barrows' April 12 opinion column.

I was thoroughly intrigued by Christina Barrows' article on Corps and Non-Reg relations. In her article she states: "It is not forced upon cadets to vote for their cadets, it is a matter of choice."

Lesley Ann Hadella
Class of '01

As the fiancée of a Corps member, I can trust most of the stories I hear. Concerning elections, what Barrows calls "a matter of choice" simply is not true.

In fact after the run off candidates were announced, it was the cadets who were in the run off, along with their fellow cadet campaigners harassing other cadets because, "They voted non-reg" and thus were voting "against the Corps."

So in essence, the choice for cadets is simple: Vote for the guy in uniform, or plan on an earful of vicious comments. What sort of choice is that?

Finally, the Corps is something that makes Texas A&M University unique. It, by far, does NOT define our traditions. We could still honor people at Muster (as they do all over the world). Football games would go on and we would still show up.

I am not saying the Corps is altogether a bad thing, but we cannot hold our entire persona as a world-class university upon them either. If we as Aggies pride ourselves on being unique, then the Corps makes up an aspect of that. But as the slogan goes, "Don't let 5 percent make up 100 percent."

Just because the Corps is not there, doesn't mean it's not "Aggie."

Serbian actions do not equal atrocities

In response to Lisa Foox's Apr. 13 opinion column,

Ignorance must be bliss for Lisa Foox and all of her followers. The Serbian "atrocities" are nothing more than a group of people protecting their country. Slobodan Milosevic is not a "Hitleristic" figure in any way and her presentation of him being one is absurd.

He is a powerful man that is protecting the interests of his country and his people. Is there something wrong with protecting an investment? Absolutely not. The United States and NATO are jumping into this matter trying to help, but all they are doing is creating more problems there.

Yesterday, one of those many million dollar bombs, blew up a passenger train and killed 10 Serbs, but you did not mention that. When the US went into Bosnia, there were 650,000 Serbs killed, but you did not mention that.

When 70,000 Serbs fought 300,000 Turks and they were all slaughtered defending their countries best interest, you failed to mention that. When 430,000 Muslim Albanians get to leave a country they tried to be liberated from and only a very small number are killed, you forgot to mention that.

The odds are stacked against you, Lisa, and any other people that seem to side with you. The media is failing to mention all of these statistics because they do not want the public to be informed of the wrongdoing that our country is performing.

The government is covering this up very well and making it seem like a success, but it is a failure, and has been from the start. Why must the United States invade and kill more people?

The Serbs have been outnumbered many times before and lost, but many unnecessary deaths were involved. The Serbian society never backs down from a challenge, and this is no different.

Michael Palmer
Class of '02

Kosovo conflict calls for U.S. forces

In response to Zach Hall's Apr. 5 opinion column.

I have one question: exactly how biased against Clinton are you? I am a hardline Republican myself, but the problem with military action in Kosovo is that we are not hitting them enough. The 500,000 Albanians that have been forced out of Kosovo are all the proof we need for action.

The daily news features dozens of Albanians with horror stories of

execution of prominent men in villages, midnight raids where the Serbs burn houses and steal possessions, people fleeing the bombing of their villages from long range Serb artillery. This is the "concrete proof" you say we do not have. Your attitude was possessed by much of the world during the execution of the Jews in Nazi Germany.

And as for trying to blame the Albanian exodus on the U.S. bombs: you are a pawn of Milosevic and his hate machine. He is Hitler on a smaller scale, but a Hitler nonetheless.

We need to commit, take control of Serbia, and then try and execute Milosevic on war crimes. Your logic is faulty, uninformed, and extremely biased and you have apparently let your hatred of the "gutless bastard" Clinton overrun your own good common sense.

Watch the news and hear the stories of the fleeing Albanians and then maybe you will see that Milosevic and his hate-mongers must be obliterated.

Shea Trantham
Class of '02

Abortion dissimilar to penis amputation

In response to Demond Reid's Apr. 8 opinion column.

Please spare us the future idiotic ramblings of Demond Reid. What Demond Reid failed to re-

alize is that the issue is not what women can do with their bodies, but rather what can women do with the bodies that are growing inside their bodies.

A fetus is a different body with a different DNA code, and removing it is not the same as cutting off your fingernails, or as Demond so eloquently put it: "cutting off your testicles."

Aborting a fetus kills a person, there is no other way to look at it. I am embarrassed to see that this article containing no thought, and ghetto similes (ie. "Smacking a woman upside the head") was given a half page.

The Battalion represents A&M and we want to at least sound educated, and if these are the best articles you have to choose from then just leave the page blank next time.

Aaron Otstott
Graduate Student

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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