

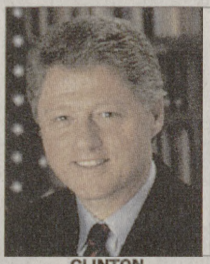
## Clinton supports wage hike

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton rallied Democrats to support a higher minimum wage on Wednesday and vowed to veto a Republican plan that would delay the increase and link it to \$122.7 billion in tax cuts.

"If Republican leaders send me a bill that makes workers wait another year for their full pay raise and holds the minimum wage hostage for risky tax cuts that threaten our prosperity, I'll veto it," said Clinton, who hosted Cabinet members, labor and community leaders and Democratic lawmakers on the South lawn of the White House.

"It is time to stop nickel and diming American working people out of the money that they need and deserve," the president said. "This is just wrong."

**"This modest increase would simply restore the minimum wage to what it was in real dollar terms in 1982."**



CLINTON

The GOP wants to enact a \$1 increase over three years and couple it with \$122.7 billion in tax cuts — a move that resurrects portions of the Republicans' \$792 billion tax cut package that Clinton vetoed last year.

Clinton is backing a Democratic plan to increase the wage by \$1 over just two years.

"This modest increase would simply restore the minimum wage to what it was in real dollar terms in 1982," Clinton said. "For a full-time worker, however, this would mean another \$2,000 a year. And if you're on the minimum wage, that's real money."

House leaders were trying to gauge support Wednesday among GOP rank-and-file for the three-year and two-year versions of the minimum wage increase, with votes possible Thursday on both along with the tax package. Some GOP conservatives, led by Rep. Jim DeMint of South Carolina, were pushing for a measure allowing states the option of implementing the wage increase.

"This whole package shows the difficulty you have when you try to forge that middle way," said Rep. Rick Lazio, R-N.Y., who has been pushing for the tax-and-wage compromise. "The challenge is to find that delicate balance that will bring people on board. Part of finding that balance is a modest tax relief package."

Cheryl Costas, a checkout clerk in Colton, Pa., with four children and a disabled husband, spoke of her struggle to raise her family on \$5.50 an hour.

"I am grateful that you are fighting to raise the minimum wage for families like mine," she told Clinton. "I know how important a dollar more an hour will be for my husband, my children and me. And so do you."

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., sponsor of the Democrats' minimum wage bill in the Senate, characterized the conflict as a "women's issue, because the majority who receive the increase... are women," and a "civil rights issue" because many minorities also would benefit.

On Capitol Hill, House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said the three-year increase is "the least worst way to do the wrong thing." He said he did not know if Republicans have the votes needed to pass it.

Despite Clinton's opposition, House Republicans are forging ahead with legislation to slash inheritance taxes and cut other taxes for businesses to offset the cost of raising the minimum wage.

Republican leaders generally oppose raising the \$5.15-an-hour minimum wage but are willing to put the question to a House vote Thursday to appease GOP moderates who have strong labor constituencies and to give conservatives another election-year opportunity to vote for tax cuts.

## 'When I grow up'



PATRIC SCHNEIDER/THE BATTALION

Future aggie **Olivia Smith**, watches the women's tennis match. Her great grandfather, **Omar Smith**, was a former tennis coach at Texas A&M.

## Renovations start in April

BY BRADY CREEL  
The Battalion

Ask Aggies what frustrates them most, and traffic and parking are likely responses. But although improvements are in the works, construction projects in College Station are likely to make matters worse before they get better.

Wellborn Road, one of the main thoroughfares that runs between main campus and West Campus, will undergo a deep rehabilitation project starting in April.

"It is really just going in there and removing the old pavement and putting in new pavement," said Pat Williams, area engineer for the Texas Department of Transportation.

During daytime working hours, one travel lane will be shut down for construction. All lanes will be reopened at night.

Pat Williams said the Wellborn project should take about four months.

"It is going to be during the summer," said Tom Williams, director of Parking, Traffic, and Transportation services (PTTS). "A student population of 15,000 is much better than one of 45,000."

Tom Williams said PTTS will provide traffic direction and control if necessary, but he does not expect traffic to be any worse than it was when Texas and University Avenues were under construction.

"We are all going to have to get into queue and be patient," Tom Williams said.

The rehabilitation project of Wellborn Road is only one of many construction projects taking place in College Station over the next year.

Bob Mosley, city engineer for the City of College Station, said an upgrade to Anderson Street was just completed, and it should provide additional capacity for a north-south flow of traffic.

"We are trying to get a little better flow options so if [drivers] don't have Texas Avenue, they can still get in the north/south corridor," Mosley said.

Mosley said new streets are currently in design for College Station. A street is slated to be built that will run from Luther to George Bush West. The second phase of that project will tie Holleman and Harvey

See WELLBORN on Page 2.

## Senator calls for more research funds

STAFF AND WIRE

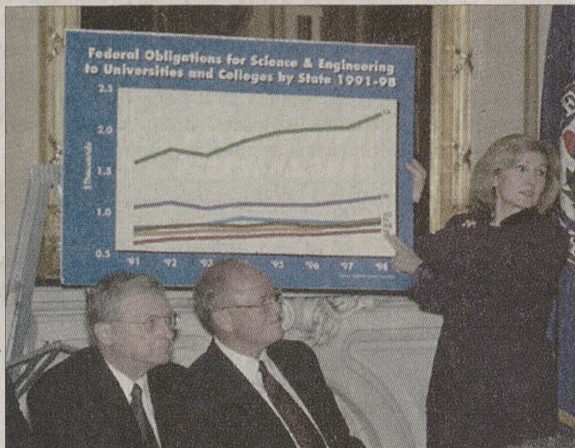


PHOTO OF COURTESY THE OFFICE OF KAY BAILEY HUTCHINSON

Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R) thinks Texas' public universities, including Texas A&M, are not getting their fair share of federal research money.

Hutchinson convened a summit of academics and elected officials to explore the issue Wednesday.

Despite its rank as the nation's second most populous state, Texas ranks sixth among all states in share of federal research and development funding, the Texas Republican said at a Capitol Hill news conference.

"When it comes to federal research funding in Texas, our state just isn't in the winner's circle often enough," she said. "That's not acceptable given the world-class research that Texas universities and colleges have been doing for years."

Texas A&M Chancellor Howard Graves and President Dr. Ray M. Bowen attended the summit, as did the chancellors and presidents of the University of Texas and Texas Tech systems.

In 1998, Texas institutions of higher learning received \$846,000 in science and engineering research money — lagging well behind top recipient California's \$2.3 billion and behind New York, Maryland, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.

To boost Texas' share, the participants suggested working

more closely with the congressional delegation, honing each system's unique research abilities and avoiding duplication within Texas higher education research programs.

Hutchinson said Texas is well-known for agriculture, health, education, defense and space research.

"We all know how much more our state can offer," she said. "Our challenge now is to make that happen."

Although Texas may be well-known for these strengths, Texas A&M Executive Vice President and Provost Ron Douglas said A&M has strengths in many other areas.

"Some areas of our research are less well-known than others, and not all areas attract federal funding," he said. "But if those areas received needed additional funding, it would facilitate the development of those programs and help them on their way to becoming competitive nationwide."

Douglas said more well-known programs include engineering, science and education, while lesser known programs at A&M include business, architecture and liberal arts programs.

"We all look forward to working with Sen. Hutchinson and other universities to advance these research programs," he said.

## Group lobbies for legislation requiring English proficiency

BY MAUREEN KANE  
The Battalion

College students have always had difficulty understanding what their professors are talking about, but for some students at the University of Missouri (MU), their difficulties extend beyond comprehension of the subject matter.

Amidst controversy and turmoil in the Missouri Legislature, the Associated Students of the University of Missouri (ASUM), a student lobbying group, has taken a stand supporting a bill introduced by Representative Joan Barry which would require professors at all Missouri state universities to be certified for English proficiency.

If passed, this legislation would require the testing of faculty for English proficiency at the beginning of each year starting Aug. 28, 2000.

According to an article in *The Maneater*, the MU student newspaper, the proposed English proficiency bill would require testing the language skill levels of professors before they are assigned classes to teach. Missouri law already requires English proficiency testing for teaching assistants.

Vice President for Academic Affairs for MU Stephen Lehmkuhle, is opposed to the proposed legislation.

"I was opposed to the bill because I didn't think of this as something that should be legislated. We should be addressing this internally," Lehmkuhle said. "The bill has been voted out of the committee, but whether it will be voted on in the legislature or not depends on the priority of the bill."

ASUM has been lobbying this bill since 1996 on behalf of the student body.

"This bill is being pushed by the ASUM and is a big issue for them," said *Maneater* University News Editor Paul Wilson.

Two different versions of this legislation have been introduced, one by Senator Peter Kinder, and one by Barry — which is supported by the ASUM. These bills have been reviewed in the chamber's Higher Education Committees and passed unanimously. According to Wilson, they are still being debated in the House.

Nine hundred miles away, on the Texas A&M campus, the problem of faculty English proficiency is not such a hotly debated topic. However, there are students who are experiencing trouble in their classes due to the English proficiency of their teaching assistants.

Anthony Garza, a sophomore chemical engineering major, took Chemistry 102 and had a teaching assistant whom he could not understand.

"It was really annoying because we had to rely on our TA to reinforce concepts. We literally couldn't understand a thing he was saying," Garza said. "He could show us how to do a lab, he still graded effectively, but whenever we had a question he wasn't prepared for, he couldn't explain it."

Brent Ballard, a junior construction science major, believes that standards for English proficiency of teaching assistants should be more strict.

"The TAs' qualifications for speaking English aren't high enough — for physics TAs at least," Ballard said. "Knowing English needs to be a higher priority."

In regard to the issue of English proficiency legislation at A&M, Dr. Lewis Ford, associate head of the physics department at A&M, said, "This is not a problem to solve with legislation. If there is a problem it should be up to departmental heads — it shouldn't be handled by state law."

Ford said TAs have to be certified by passing an English

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## Motels offer students discount over break

BY ANNA BISHOP  
The Battalion

It is no secret that many Texas A&M University students are just plain sleepy. They doze in the MSC Flagroom, snooze in the library and sit slump-shouldered and bleary-eyed through class lectures.

The real problem arises when these sleepy students get behind a steering wheel.

With spring break one day away, traveling students should be aware of a program designed to help alleviate the dangerous problem of drowsy driving — the Lupe Medina Program.

In September 1998, Texas A&M student senator and junior political science major Rob Ferguson authored the Lupe Medina Bill for Driving Safety.

According to the program, students traveling late at night during the weekends

and throughout winter and spring breaks will be given price breaks when they need to pull over and rest.

Students traveling at least 55 miles from their home campus and presenting a valid student I.D. are eligible to receive special rates at participating motels.

These motels include the Supertel Hospitality Super 8 Motel franchises, which offer a \$30 night's stay for traveling students.

Discounts for students traveling within 50 miles of his or her home school are at the discretion of the General Manager.

As of March 1, 2000, the Super 8 discount officially began in Texas and eight other states: Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

The rate is based upon availability and the offer is valid through December 2000. "The first year the program went into

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### THE LUPE MEDINA PROGRAM

**What?:** Motel discount for students traveling late at night

**How much?:** Students pay \$30 (with a valid student ID)

**Where?:** Super 8 Motel franchises in Texas, Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin

**When?:** Weekends, winter break, and spring break

**Why?:** To prevent accidents resulting from drowsy driving

JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

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**Batt Radio**

• Listen to KAMU-FM 90.9 at 1:57 p.m. for details on March Madness

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