

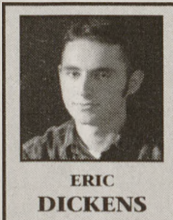
## Block the vote

### Corps block unfairly hinders election process for cadets and non-regs

### Students not familiar with Corps often overreact; Corps block system not unfair

In the world of politics, a political action committee (PAC) is one of the most shady and suspect entities. PACs have a bad reputation because they promote the one-sided interest of a select few and impress it upon the masses. Unfortunately, this darker side of government does not stop at the national or even state level. Here in Aggieland, students voting in the past Student Government Association (SGA) and yell leader elections witnessed a maroon-colored PAC in action.

The Corps block system that has been firmly in place since the first non-reg student dared run for elected position was, once again, in full effect this year. Some credit is due to the Corps for speaking into office a cadet student body president and one more senior yell leader, but regardless of success rate, the Corps block works against students.



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can have promoting them and working for their campaign. However, the Corps block's golden children not only have their full roster of campaign workers but the additional strength of the unsolicited, organized effort to support them initiated and carried out by over 2,000 cadets. Non-reg candidates cannot fairly compete with that amount of backing.

Even more critical to the election process than the overwhelming campaign support the Corps block presents is the clout their votes represent. Having 2,000 students in an organization dedicated to promoting your campaign is one thing, but having that same number encouraged to vote for you is another. Again, non-reg candidates are shafted by the Corps' unwillingness to officially support a candidate who does not wear tan.

Finally, possibly the most blatant problem with the Corps block is that it undermines the very essence of democratic elections. Free elections are aimed at "putting the best man in office." However, if the best candidate for a SGA or yell leader position happens to be a non-reg, their credibility is immediately discounted by the Corps block and the thousands they try to influence. Just like their older, shadier counterparts in PACs, the supporters of the Corps block ignore the ideal of electing the best candidate for the sake of putting their candidate, qualified or not, into office.

The free will of today's Corps of Cadets pales in comparison to the unquestioned authority that dominated it through A&M's history. It is time for the de-evolution of the Corps' group-think to continue and to do away with the Corps block practice. The Corps should stop officially promoting only one candidate or group of candidates for office and open all candidates up to the support of Corps members, not as regs, but as students. The boys in tan should encourage their members to evaluate each individual candidate on their own merits, and, although this may be a new idea on the quad, to tell cadets to make up their own minds about who they want to vote for.

Eric Dickens is a junior English major.

Tensions arise every year during student elections. Around this time, that which binds Aggies together disappears and many students begin to see each other as strictly Corps or non-reg. The root of this yearly split is the accusations that Corps members are blind to the platforms of those running and blindly support only the Corps candidates.



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Students looking at the Corps of Cadets from the outside view its goals as selfish and elitist, an example of how skewed images of organizations can be. It is logical that the Corps, like any other organization, would tend to support its own candidates in the election. As the largest student organization on campus, it is difficult to shake the reputation of being a political machine. The Corps block, as it is known, is not as bad as students make it seem.

It is true that the Corps selects a group of candidates to run through a primary-style system, but it is fair both to cadets and non-regs. Furthermore, there is no pressure to vote for Corps candidates for positions such as class president or student body president.

Students campaigning for non-reg hopefuls raise concerns that cadets, especially freshmen, are pushed to vote for a specific candidate. Yes, the cadets support each other and live regimented lifestyles, but it is a far cry from the Orwellian society students imagine.

Peer pressure, especially to vote for Corps candidates for SBP, is almost nonexistent. The anti-Corps sentiment that becomes prevalent during elections seems to make students overlook the numbers of cadets who were campaigning for non-regs. Corps members have the same concerns for the University and the students who hold these leadership positions. It is ridiculous to think that they would vote for a candidate based solely on their affiliation with the Corps.

Those who criticize the Corps block ought to realize how preposterous their gripes are. They are making a big deal out of nothing.

Accusations were voiced by many students after the last yell leader and student body president elections. Students expressed concern over the motives behind head yell leader Jeff Bailey's appeal of the run-off. His actions were interpreted by many as a reaction based on the risk of not having the Corps lose in a run-off for senior yell.

There are dozens of cadets who could make great yell leaders. The two chosen to run for the position have already been through a filtering process and are selected because they are the best qualified to represent the entire student population. A cadet who wants to be elected for selfish reasons will be weeded out in the Corps system. There is nothing stopping such a cadet from filing to run for yell, however.

The Corps block is not corrupt. The system works. Certainly the Corps has an advantage because they work together, but there is no conspiracy to be unfair to non-reg candidates. In fact, that is the reason the Corps only ran two candidates for senior yell. If the Corps block was in reality this corrupt political action committee, it would have tried to unseat Ricky Wood. Instead, he will be head yell leader. The Corps yell leaders admit that Wood did a great job and supported his re-election bid.

One of the major results of these misconceptions is that the Corps — non-reg issue arises. It is unfortunate that many non-regs use the Corps block system to raise Corps — non-reg tensions. Flyers with "Don't let five percent represent 100 percent" are often posted around campus. The Corps block primary system works so that the cadets who run have been selected by their peers.

Unfortunately, relations are further strained by non-regs who run on anti-Corps platforms. The first quality in an ideal yell leader is the ability to represent all Aggies. If the Corps seems adamant about having its candidates win the yell leader positions, it is caused by the frustration of running against students who dislike the organization.

Students at A&M need to rise above the Corps — non-reg dispute. Just because the Corps only runs a certain number of candidates does not mean there is a conspiracy to take over Aggieland. Students need to understand that in the big scope of things, the Corps is just another student organization that takes pride in having members involved on campus. It is not anti-non-reg and should not be labeled as such.

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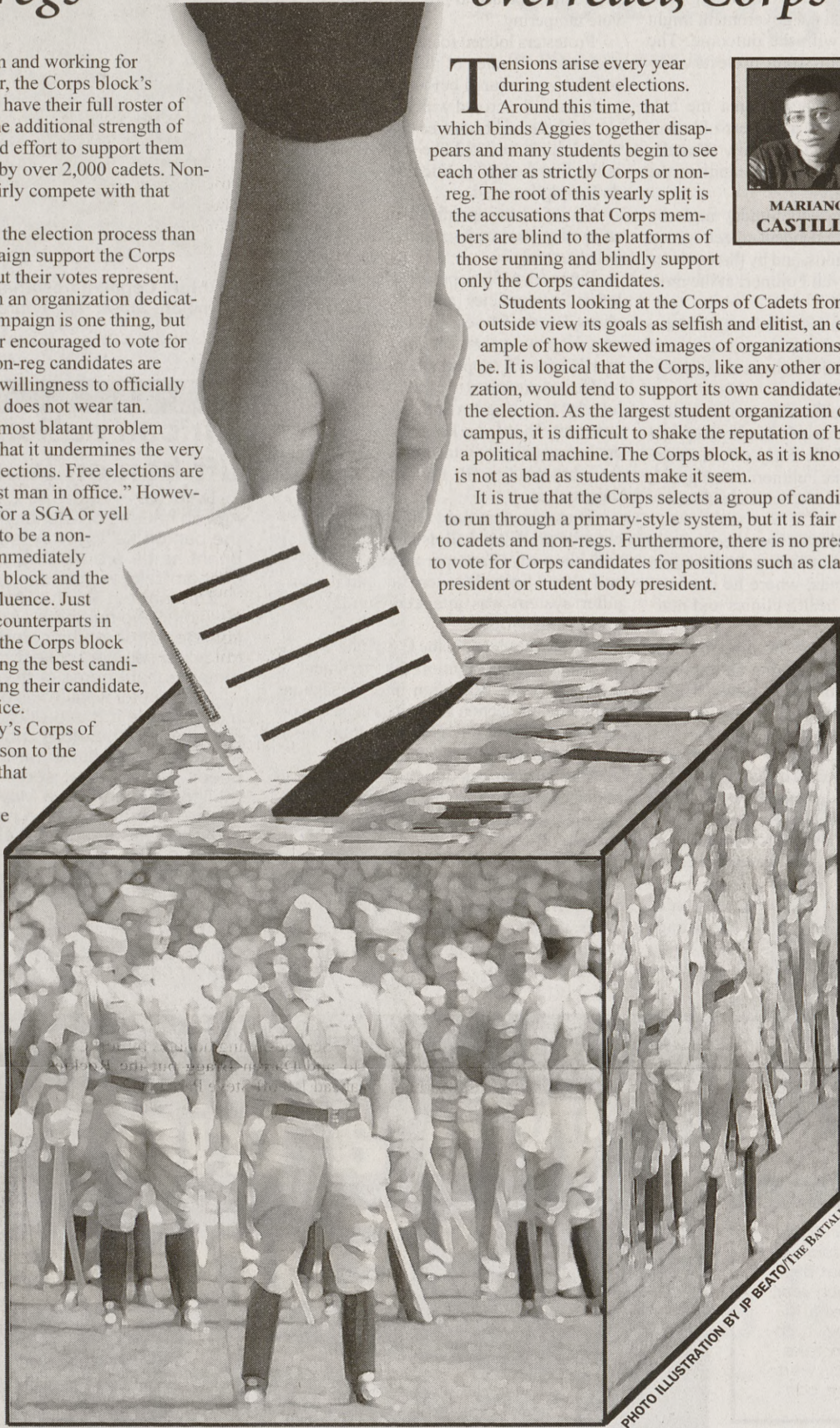


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JP BENTO/THE BATTALION

## Balancing bras and bravado in business a challenge for women

Eighteen hour bras and "No Nonsense" Pantyhose. Who knew that a quick glance at the lingerie department could sum up the identity of female leaders so well? The balancing act that women in powerful positions face is a difficult one to understand and appreciate.

Before the cries of "feminist" ring out, hold on for a moment. Just try to imagine how hard it must be for women to garner respect as both power brokers and social butterflies. Too nice and bubbly and she's as credible as the flighty blonde Phoebe on "Friends." Try to go to the other extreme and she's as cuddly as everyone's favorite New York senatorial candidate. Too bad Xena Warrior Princess couldn't attend the Martha Stewart school of charm.

This is why you may hear women complain about being taken seriously. Putting in 18 hours a day can wear anyone out — male or female alike. But is it the bra and what it covers that really proves a businesswoman's worth?

The answer should be no. But all too often,

women with potential to promote change and lead others effectively are dismissed from the opportunity to do so.

This occurs in many cases because the balance between seriousness and graciousness that women are expected to maintain is too difficult a task. It isn't that women aren't deemed capable or afforded the rights to have the opportunity — that has been federal law for some time now. Rather, it seems as though too many people expect a perfect balance of "No Nonsense" in both senses of the phrase. Feminine and silky on one hand, independent and charismatic on the other. If only it were so simple. True to life, though, it is all too easy to hit a snag and disappointingly watch everything unravel.

Not that this fact is tragic or insurmountable. It just becomes discouraging over time when much is expected in the way of female leadership but few visible gains seem to be made. Granted, the luxury that I am afforded to even provide such commentary illustrates the great strides

made by women in the past century and a half. Yet it is still troublesome to see such a small representation of truly powerful women at the forefront that strike this delicate balance successfully.

The need for such female role models is more urgent than ever as we forge ahead in a new century. The "steel magnolias," as the southern phrase characterizes them, stand at a turning point for change. It is true that women have access to careers of all kinds. But this access means nothing if few women actually can break into traditional bastions of male dominance. It is crucial that female leadership is established and solidified as to legitimize all the gains that have been made.

So, how to reconcile Phoebe and Hilary? Well, trying to buy out the opposite stereotype doesn't work — we all know that Mrs. Clinton's favorite pastime is not baking cookies.

To understand what it takes, it is important to look to those who have succeeded in this difficult task. Take, for example, Cherie Booth. Forty-five

years old, this high-powered employment and human rights lawyer and mother of three is expecting her fourth child in two months. Having achieved success in her career and as a mother and wife, she can also throw parties with the best of them. Regularly entertaining for heads of state is part of the duty of being the wife of any Prime Minister, particularly one as powerful as her husband, Britain's Tony Blair. Respected by her colleagues and loved by her family and the British people they serve, she represents the best of what a woman can be.

Another example is Carly Fiorina, the wildly popular CEO of Hewlett-Packard. There is no nonsense about being Fortune 500's "Most powerful woman in business" two years in a row (<http://www.imaging.hp.com>). She earned her way to the top resolutely and graciously. Neither sleaze nor spinster-like characteristics factor into the calculation of her success. Rather, Fiorina has worked hard over the past 20 years at industry giants such

as AT&T and Lucent Technologies. This, balanced with her winning personality, garnered her the top spot at one of the hottest companies in the technology sector.

Clearly, the opportunities exist for women to rise and lead others with both strength and grace. But the balancing act that female leaders are expected to maintain is a difficult one. The mix of work — in a career or possibly as a wife and mother — and the drive to succeed provides many challenges to women. It is time to give women more credit for the roles that they must shoulder and work that they accomplish.

This change in attitudes cannot be a passing trend — it is here to stay. It must be considered as functional and necessary as any staple of a wardrobe. Perhaps this will be as difficult as finding the perfect bra, but it surely is not impossible.

Katherine Martini is a columnist for the Cavalier Daily at the University of Virginia.

### MAIL CALL

#### Microsoft's dominance is over

In response to Nicholas Roznovsky's April 10 column.

Microsoft's days are numbered and it is already on its way out.

The Internet has significantly leveled the playing field in computer-related topics as the ability of devices to interconnect has become of the utmost importance. The old model of doing things supported proprietary systems like those created by Microsoft products. This was perfectly fine because none of these products would ever have to connect with anything outside of the department, which was standardized on that set of protocols.

Today, though, computers must be able to connect through the Internet to computers with very different setups. This makes it irrelevant as to what the computer is running or who made it. No longer can any company control the standard because another free specification will be just as good and cost less, thus getting more users and becoming the standard.

With the advent of very powerful, low-cost processors and cheap LCD displays, computers are becoming ready to move into the class of "device" where they are very specialized, and spe-

cialization removes the need for an operating system. Microsoft sees this and has been hurting consumers by fighting it for years, but even so they can not win. It's all in the economics of a free, very stable device versus an expensive, buggy computer.

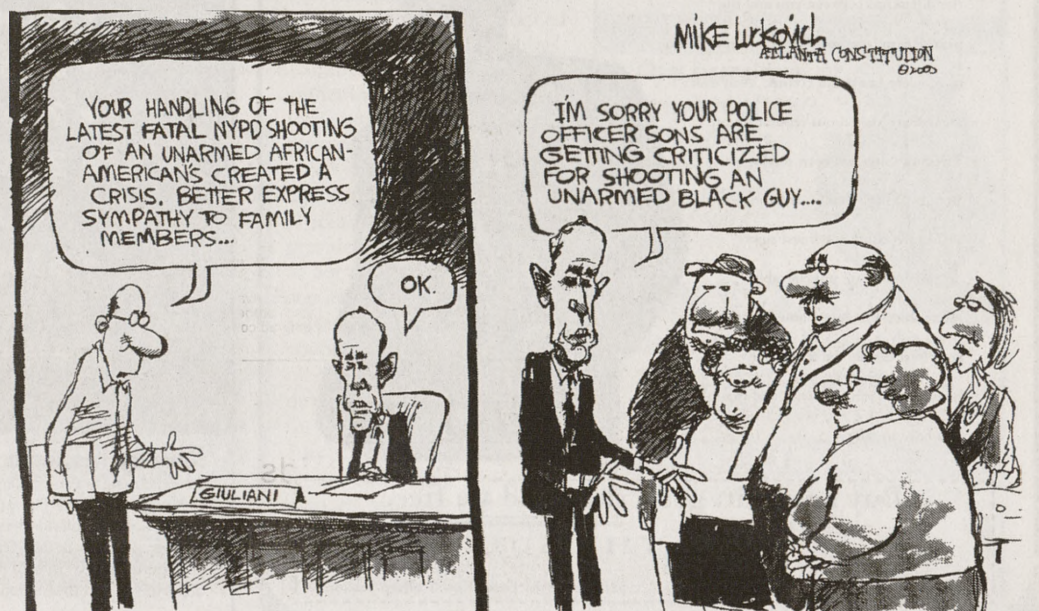
Soon the era of low-cost computing devices will be upon us, and Microsoft will be pushed back to the same level as everyone else. They will no longer be holding us back.

Chris Carlin Class of '03

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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OK.

I'M SORRY YOUR POLICE OFFICER SONS ARE GETTING CRITICIZED FOR SHOOTING AN UNARMED BLACK GUY...