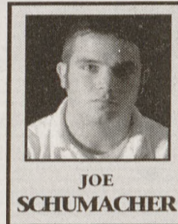


From student council to city council

Students should support city council representation



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION



JOE SCHUMACHER

College students are perhaps the most underrepresented voter population in the Brazos Valley. It is a safe assumption that Texas A&M students easily make up one-third of the Bryan-College Station population, yet there is not a single elected college student representative on either city council board.

All too often, city council decisions that affect students are made and students have little or no say in these decisions. They definitely have no vote. Perhaps because students are seen as temporary members of the community, not much has been done to include them in the small-town politics of Bryan-College Station.

Texas A&M students are partially to blame for this situation. Many students have a "consequences are consequences as long as I graduate" attitude. However, several Aggies are looking to become active members of the Bryan and College Station City Councils.

In Bryan, Hugh "Alec" Pointer and Christopher Olsen are running for seats on the Bryan City Council. Meanwhile, Michael Blum, a junior aerospace engineering major, has thrown his hat in the ring against Larry Mariott, incumbent of College Station City Council seat four. Students should consider the advantages of having a student on the city council. If elected, Blum will be the first student representative on the city council to have a vote.

In the past, Texas A&M students have

been represented by a student government-appointed liaison officer. This campus liaison could give advice but could not vote on the city council. A fresh perspective is needed on the Bryan and College Station City Council, and it is time students had a voice in the goings on of this community.

One vote does not appear to be big deal, but it could easily cast a tie-breaking vote in decisions — decisions where the students' views may not be otherwise understood or presented.

While the Student Government Association and student body president are worthy positions of service on campus, so much more "on the outside" can affect students.

"A recent issue that affects students is removing of free parking in the Northgate area," Blum said. "Not only is this a convenient place for customers of Northgate to park, but for students."

A student on either city council could have many advantages for the whole community. At times, there seems to be an "us against them" mentality between residents and students. Having a student on the city council will increase positive communication with the city, with students and residents working together to solve problems.

However, one side should not be reduced to a mere focus group for the other. Many people in the community may reduce a student running for office to some

sort of prank. They may think students do not have time to familiarize themselves with the issues, and do not know the history of the area.

However, the student candidates have all spent time working with their city councils before.

Simply put, Texas A&M students should support other students who run for city council.

It may be too late for students to register to vote in the city elections, but they can do more than just vote. They can work on a campaign staff or register other students to vote.

Admittedly, city council meetings are boring. Instead of forming a "B-CS Students United for Changing City Councils" group with no purpose other than to protest with signs and obnoxious slogans, students should band together to send one person to represent all. Then, instead of merely complaining about what goes on in city council, students would have done their democratic part.

While the Student Government Association and student body president are worthy positions of service on campus, so much more "on the outside" can affect students. Many members of student government are merely padding their resumes.

A student city council member's voting ability would have more power than an SBP's opinion on a topic. Additionally, it would give this student experience. It would also make a pretty cool political science 485 class.

Regardless, it is time for students to stop being silent members of this community.

Joe Schumacher is a senior journalism major.



Chinese involvement in Taiwanese independence calls for U.S. reaction

The intimidating eyes of China and the fumbling hands of the United States have ensured that the Republic of Taiwan is not a true republic. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a republic as "a government in which supreme power is held by the citizens entitled to vote." Tragically, this definition does not apply to the Republic of Taiwan.

Simply stated, China has always considered Taiwan "a renegade province," and that there is only "one China." Taiwan has never been allowed to fully spread its wings as an independent country. China's call for reunification has always been a monkey on Taiwan's back. Accordingly, the Clinton administration in recent years has slowly siphoned American support from democratic Taiwan in favor of communist China.

The Clinton administration must stop walking this diplomatic tightrope. Surely it can see the potential hypocrisy of its actions — Uncle Sam turning his back on the American values of democratic government and self-determination in favor of economic gain in an oppressive communist country. It is the epitome of "selling one's soul" for self-gratification.

The time for choosing loyalties is now — the United States must clearly state whose side it is on. By not doing so, the United States is merely prolonging this agonizing standoff rather than bringing it to an amicable conclusion.

As reported by CNN, U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke reiterated the American government's support of the "one China" policy during a state visit to China last month.

For Taiwan, this statement raises a serious question: Whose side is the American government really on? It has had a history of being pro-Taiwan — to the point where previous American presidents have not hesitated to send aircraft carrier groups near the Taiwan Strait in order to diffuse Chinese threats. In addition, there is currently legislation in Congress that calls for deepening the military partnerships between Taiwan and the United States.

However, the balance of support has been slowly creeping in the other direction as China has become more and more "Western friendly" — in particular, its encouragement of foreign investment. Recognizing an untapped economic gold mine, the Clinton administration has become one of China's biggest advocates for entrance into the World Trade Organization.

Being China's advocate comes at a heavy price — it requires American recognition of China's claim to Taiwan while placing American support for Taiwan's independence in limbo. Essentially, the Clinton administration has become "two-faced."

China's claim to Taiwan stems from the Chinese civil war of 1949 where the Chinese Nationalist Party — the losing side — fled the communist-controlled mainland and reestablished itself offshore in Taiwan.

After 40 years of martial law, Taiwan established a parliamentary government with the endorsement of the United States — the first open presidential elections were held in the past decade. Along the same lines, Taiwan has managed to assemble and maintain one of the most robust economies in the world — roughly based on that of the United States.

During the island's presidential elections last month, the issue of whether or not to move toward formal independence from China was at the forefront, with the topic of American loyalty not far behind.

By electing Chen Shui-Bian of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, the Taiwanese people have sent an irrefutable signal that they no longer care to be held hostage by the mainland.

"There is no point trying to drag out negotiations with a hungry China. I hope Taiwan becomes independent in the future," said Chen-Su-Lian, 24.

Hopefully, the Clinton administration will consider this signal carefully. By ignoring it, the administration risks hypocrisy. By embracing it, it risks destroying hard-earned economic interests in China. It is a difficult choice: to live by one's principles or to live by one's pocketbook.

David Lee is a junior economics and journalism major.

While citizens pay expensive gas prices politicians play energy crisis blame game

It is time for another round of "Pin the Blame on Someone Else." This game is a favorite of Washington politicians, and it has started again. This round's contestants are President Clinton and the House of Representatives, namely Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert. Each pins the other for who is at fault for the recent energy crisis. Prices at the pump have soared, and the people are complaining. However, Washington bureaucrats — instead of fixing the problem — are working hard to cover their rear ends.

On March 31, the president's authority to draw from the government's emergency oil reserve ended. The Senate has already passed such an extension to continue this presidential authority, but the House has made no move to pass the measure.

This action prompted Clinton to say that Congress has missed the mark by failing to take the crucial steps to augment the nation's energy supply in the face of rising prices for crude oil and gasoline. Clinton should stop worrying about blaming Congress and work to find other means of solving the problem.

Many people have suggested that the United States should work to negotiate with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to see if it will increase production of petroleum. In March, OPEC agreed to increase the supply, but the effects of this increase will not be felt for six to eight weeks. This an-

nouncement leaves some hope for consumers, but it is not enough.

Hastert responded to Clinton's accusations of Congressional blame by stating on CNN that the Clinton administration is at fault. According to Hastert, the administration has not properly dealt with U.S. allies such as Mexico and Kuwait properly to solve the problem without depending on OPEC. Since America has helped these countries, with actions such as the bailout of the Mexican economy, they should return the

Both sides of the argument should stop this unnecessary bickering and work to solve the energy crisis.

help. Hastert believes that the United States is being pushed around by OPEC nations. It seems that both sides are blaming someone else and not much is being accomplished.

Yet, an article in *The Australian Financial Report* said the Clinton administration has used "ham-fisted diplomacy" in dealing with OPEC. The "ham-fisted diplomacy" includes calls placed by Bill Richardson, U.S. secretary of energy, during meetings of the OPEC ministers.

Many of the ministers were insulted when Richardson interrupted their meeting. Many people said these very public demands have made OPEC nations look like American puppets.

Republicans said that the United States should cut foreign aid and arms sales to OPEC countries in order to get OPEC to increase oil production. Even though OPEC has agreed to increase oil production, much of the public wants an immediate fix to the problem. Others say that these tactics are just giving those opposed to U.S. presence in the Middle East and Persian Gulf areas more reason to be anti-American.

If bipartisan politics could occur during such times of crisis as this, something more could be accomplished. Waiting for OPEC nations to decide if they are going to sell oil to the United States is not a way to practice politics. Both sides of the argument should stop this unnecessary bickering and work to solve the energy crisis. If they cannot find an immediate solution for this crisis, they need to work on a plan for the next time this happens.

OPEC has the majority of the petroleum market cornered, but the United States can find ways around the problem. Congress and the Clinton administration need to put aside their differences and solve the problem.

The American public should not have to suffer while the leaders of their nation try to blame each other. The crisis will not disappear once they decide who is at fault. The prices at the pump will continue to rise as faith in the leaders will dwindle quickly in the minds of American citizens.

Brianne Porter is a freshman electrical engineering major

MAIL CALL

Loupot's has the right to reclaim substation space

In response to Rolando Garcia's April 12 article.

Does City Council member Dennis Maloney really think that it is considered a temper tantrum for a property owner to do as he wishes with his own property?

The Northgate Police Substation has been occupying prime commercial space rent free for nearly a year. If the owner of the building wants to evict the College Station Police from this building that is his business. Since when is it the City

Council's job to whine about how property owners manage their property?

I walked by the Northgate Police substation yesterday, and it's nothing more than an empty room with a large desk and a high-backed office chair. The station is open during the day, closes at 4 p.m., and re-opens for an hour from 7 - 8 p.m. The station is clearly a waste of space and manpower.

Maloney said that "they don't care about safety here, they don't care about people throwing beer bottles or women getting assaulted, we just want our parking spaces."

What kind of absurd statement is that? I think Maloney is the one having the temper tantrum. Maybe he has forgotten that in 1998 his City Council

passed an ordinance banning all glass containers from the Northgate area.

How about putting the evicted officers out on the streets? I think it would be rather difficult to fight street crime from behind a desk.

Maloney argues that the 27 parking spaces make it difficult for emergency vehicles to access the Northgate area. When have you ever seen an emergency vehicle responding to an accident circle the block looking for a place to parallel park?

Maloney needs to stop harassing this property owner with his silly argument and start moving the Police out of that worthless sub-station.

In a couple of weeks, I intend to buy my books at Loupot's Bookstore. Hopefully

when that time comes, I'll have a place to park.

Steven Gilbert
Class of '01

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: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald Texas A&M University College Station, TX 77843-1111 Campus Mail: 1111 Fax: (409) 845-2647 E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com