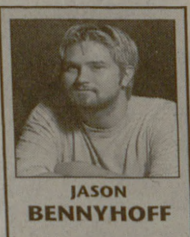


Don't check your guns Bill removes cities' rights, but offers no added protection in return



JASON BENNYHOFF

city officials across Texas gasped when the Texas Senate passed a bill that would remove a city's right to ban concealed weapons from public property.

While the bill has not received final approval, that it passed the Senate at all is insanity. Lawmakers who support the bill said it was designed to eliminate confusing laws that differ from city to city and establish the state's power to regulate guns.

While this is a noble goal, the execution is lacking.

The state has not laid down concrete rules for where handguns can be carried. This is like building a boat from top down and launching it before the bottom on.

Even if the bill ultimately passes, the state would have the power to override local regulations on where handguns could be carried, but so far it has made any substantial limitations where concealed handguns could be carried.

Under state law, it is illegal to carry a concealed handgun into a bar, prison, amusement park, school or at collegiate professional sporting events.

However, the law is not specific at many other public locations. For instance, if the Senate's current bill is to pass, concealed guns would be allowed at public pools, churches and classrooms.

So, the only way for a city to attempt to regulate any of the hundreds of places not covered in the current state law is to lobby the legislature in two years to impose limitations.

This is absurd. How can local governments be expected to operate efficiently if they are forced to sit on their thumbs for two years and pay lobbying fees up to \$100,000, simply to be heard by the legislature?

This two year limit puts an unreasonable burden on Texas citizens. If the Senate bill passes, every Texan will be forced to look over his or her shoulder while in public. This will continue for at least two years, or until the legislature gets its act together, which will undoubtedly be much longer than two years.

No parent should have to watch other parents at a public pool to make sure they are not carrying a weapon around children.

No party in a court proceeding should have to hire bodyguards to make sure they are not shot during a lawsuit. No city, municipality or county should be disavowed of its right to defend its citizens.

Presumably, the authors of the bill had good intentions. However, implementing those intentions leaves a lot to be desired.

Sen. Todd Staples, R-Palestine, said in a statement to the *Dallas Morning News* that the bill was passed so the government could keep its records straight.

"Driver's licenses, hunting licenses, fishing licenses, professional licenses are all controlled from the state perspective," Staples said. "As a matter of consistency, the regulation of firearms should be done at the state level as well."

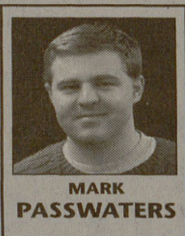
Staples may be right, but the state should provide for the safety of its citizens before considering the best way to do its bookkeeping. One can only hope that legislators will come to their senses before this bill is passed, or we will all have to go around armed.

Jason Bennyhoff is a senior journalism major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Republicans should bid McCain good riddance



MARK PASSWATERS

Rumors are flying around Capitol Hill that another senator might be thinking of bolting the Republican Party, and the senator is none other than John McCain of Arizona. If McCain wants to leave the GOP, Republicans should let him.

McCain ran for the Republican nomination president last year, and lost a bitter campaign to President Bush. The failed campaign left McCain consistently opposed anything the president has sent to the Senate floor. McCain was one of two Republicans to vote against Bush's tax cut package, using traditional democratic phrases such as "the president has

left the lower classes behind" to state his opposition. McCain recently spent a weekend in Arizona with Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, while refusing to come to the White House to meet with the head of his own party.

Some of McCain's supporters have taken this to mean that he will switch parties. Then, McCain will confront Bush in 2004 as an independent and be victorious.

Before he joined the senate, McCain was recognized as a hero, a man who withstood five years of imprisonment in the "Hanoi Hilton" and never cracked. Sadly, it is time to recognize McCain as a political fraud. He could never be a Democrat — he is far too conservative on a wide variety of issues. McCain strictly interprets the Second Amendment and has one of the most consistent pro-life records in the Senate.

Both of these would not make him an asset to Democrats.

His crusade for campaign finance reform is one of Washington's ultimate hypocrisies; McCain was busted for taking illegal campaign contributions from Charles Keating. Why would one of the "Keating Five" suddenly have such a change of heart? Perhaps because it is easier to cheat when you make the rules.

McCain's staffers often note that McCain's hero is Teddy Roosevelt. Former President Roosevelt left the Republican Party in 1912 to run against his self-appointed successor, William Howard Taft.

Roosevelt's need for the limelight helped split the Republicans and gave the presidency to Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Is this what McCain

wants to do in his seemingly blind desire to get back at Bush?

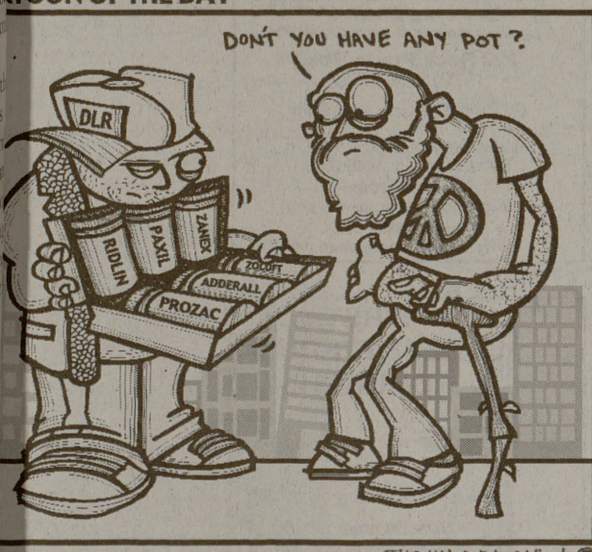
But who is to say that McCain is not a Democrat in waiting? McCain himself, allegedly.

"I have no desire to leave the Republican Party," he said in a press release this Monday. He probably could have fooled President Bush and Minority Leader Trent Lott. Is this the same individual who said, "The Republican Party needs to grow up?"

Is McCain a rabble-rousing moderate who is turned-on by the charms of the Democratic Party, or is he the strong conservative his voting record says he is? The truth is simple. McCain is the guy in front of the TV cameras, and that is where he will continue to be found.

Mark Passwaters is a senior electrical engineering major.

TOON OF THE DAY



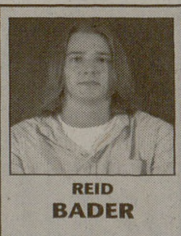
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Guest worker program bad for all



REID BADER

On May 21, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft announced the Bush Administration is planning on working with Mexico to establish a guest worker program. Proponents of the program try to make the plan sound beneficial to the United States, but the plan would hurt more than help on both sides of the border.

A guest worker program between the United States and Mexico would give millions of illegal Mexican immigrant and migrant workers automatic legal status if they sign up for the program once it is in place. Thereafter, they must return to Mexico and reapply for guest worker status every year.

One of the strongest supporters of this program is Sen. Phil Gramm. In his 2001 prospectus for the guest worker program he states, "It would encourage them (illegal immigrants) to come out of the shadows, to work in dignity, and then to return to their families in Mexico with the capital and skills they acquire as guest workers in the United States."

Gramm and other supporters say they have the best interests of both countries at

heart with this plan. However, the guest worker program does not offer significant solvency for current problems, such as lowering the number of illegal aliens entering and residing in the United States, stimulating the United States and Mexican economies and providing stronger international relations.

The program calls for all undocumented workers to apply for legal status and it be automatically granted. Doing this will certainly lower the number of illegal aliens because the plan in essence eliminates the title "illegal alien."

Gramm is right when he says the program will allow illegal workers "to come out of the shadows." However, he neglects to realize there are American citizens in those shadows too. Turning illegal immigrants into legal workers means the workforce will grow. If the guest worker program is implemented then a possibility exists for minimum wages to remain stagnant for years.

Stimulating the economies of both countries is another reason supporters of the program encourage its passage. Gramm's plan does not explain how allowing millions of Mexican workers to remain in the United States benefits both countries.

Supporters of the program, especially

those along the border, say that a guest worker program will end the recent deaths of illegal immigrants coming over with "coyotes," people who guide immigrants across the border for a fee sometimes as great as \$1,000.

Andres Morales, an illegal immigrant currently working in the United States stated in a *Dallas Morning News* article, "Why would I want to do that if it would mean having to come forward and then I'd have to reapply every year? If I'm not selected, I will have to pay a coyote again. What's the point?"

During the Clinton administration, a guest worker program was never enacted because there was no confidence that it would benefit the United States. The Commission on Immigration Reform in 1995 stated that "a large scale agricultural guest worker program ... is not in the national interest ... such a program would be a grievous mistake."

Any guest worker program offered by Mexico or the United States must be met with harsh criticism; because of the possibilities of reduced wages and a greater competition for low wage jobs.

Reid Bader is a junior journalism major.