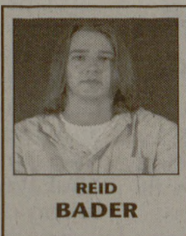


Drive now, talk later

New York's new cell phone ban should be followed by other states

A recent bill passed in New York, that bans cell phone use while driving, is a step in the right direction to curb accidents. The New York ban requires drivers who want to make or receive calls on their cell phones to either use a headset or pull over to the side of the road.



REID BADER

If a New Yorker uses a handheld cell phone while driving, they can be fined up to \$100. Exceptions are made for those dialing 911 or using hands-free systems.

The ban in New York was the first of its kind at the state level. At least 36 other states have had similar legislation presented to them, but none have

However, a 1997 study in the New England Journal of Medicine reported that talking on a cell phone quadruples a driver's chances of being in an accident.

acted upon it. The Texas legislature should consider taking a more active approach to implementing similar legislation here.

New York Governor Pataki said, "They're (cell phones) a great tool, but they also ... pose an enormous threat to public safety."

Many municipalities have acted independent and implemented bans. One of the first of these was Hilltown, Pa., in 1999.

The ban came as a result of the death of a 2-year-old-girl who was killed in an automobile wreck, caused by another driver using a cell phone.

Opponents of the bill say that a ban on cell phones in cars would be another infringement on their rights and that there is not enough evidence to warrant such a ban.

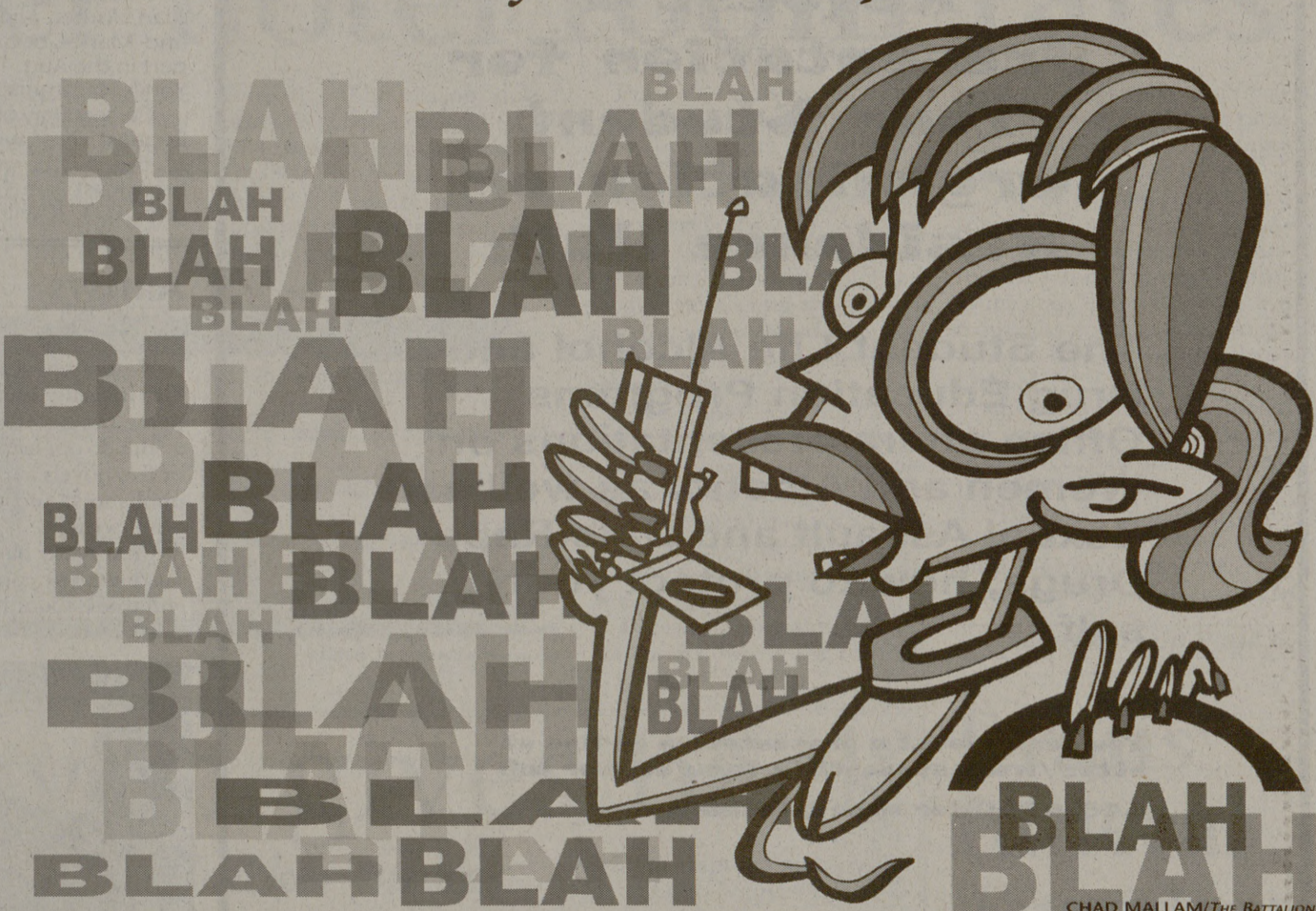
However, a 1997 study in the New England Journal of Medicine reported that talking on a cell phone quadruples a driver's chances of being in an accident.

Some critics state that a ban should not be in place until there has been sufficient statistical data that links accidents and cell phone use. However, these studies would take years to conduct and there is already sufficient evidence of a linkage in place.

A University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Study states that only 1.5 percent of accidents that occur are because of distracted drivers using cell phones.

This is not as small of a number as it seems — according to Ford in the Ford/Firestone tire recall, only .000241 percent of the tires are defective and might lead to an accident. Clearly the potential for cell phones to cause accidents is very high and must be dealt with quickly.

The New York ban is further strengthened by the fact that Verizon Wireless, a leading wireless communication company in the United States, supports the ban.



CHAD MALLAM/THE BATTALION

Mark Tuller, general counsel to Verizon Wireless, said, "Everyone knows it's sensible to keep both hands on the wheel, and we educate our customers to drive sensibly."

The majority of the state of Texas feels the same way about banning cell phone use while driving. According to

a September 2000 Scripps Howard Poll, 59 percent of Texans would support a statewide ban on cell phone use while driving.*

All drivers' education classes teach that driving requires the total attention of the driver.

Texas needs to apply this same

mentality to the legislative process and pay attention to the facts and feelings of the people. To do this, legislation similar to New York's must be passed as soon as possible.

Reid Bader is a junior political science major.

Unfair generalizations

Media depictions of Muslims as terrorists harmful to U.S. Arab population

Last Thursday, a national social ill was perpetrated inside the White House by its own Secret Service agents.



JASON BENNYHOFF

A group of Islamic leaders left the White House in protest Thursday after one of them, a congressional intern, was asked to leave the building. Apparently, the removal was merely a case of mistaken identity. The Secret Service agents asserted that they were not aware of who the intern was. However, it is difficult to believe that he would have been treated so rudely and dismissed so quickly had he not been of Arab descent.

America is fast becoming a divided nation. Every day, Americans are bombarded with im-

ages of the Arab population, and Muslims as a whole, as vicious, zealous murderers who are capable of anything. Scores of books, movies and television programs have vilified this group of people because of the actions of a callous few.

Terrorism is a problem in Arab countries, and some Islamic leaders have even issued holy edicts condemning America and promoting the killing of American citizens.

However, it is unfair for Americans to condemn an entire religion and ethnic group because of those actions.

Every day, a religious lunatic or a political malcontent condemns the American government and swears that he will shoot government agents right in America's heartland. Yet no one throws Wisconsin cheese makers out of the White House or makes a movie suggesting that they are going to blow up children with a pipe

bomb concealed in a cheese log.

The fact that these injustices occur is bad enough, the background of the intern removed from the White House makes it all the worse.

Abdullah Alarian has never been convicted of any crime and his acceptance as an intern for the United States Congress should speak well of his character.

Beyond that, Alarian's uncle, Mazen Al-Najjar, was arrested and served three years in a Florida prison for allegedly using an Islamic think tank as a front for terrorism. But Al-Najjar was later released after a panel of judges and the attorney general of the United States found no reason to hold him. Alarian's family already has been the victim of a country contemptuously sneering at all things Muslim, and that makes this most recent offense all the worse.

Alarian probably would not have been re-

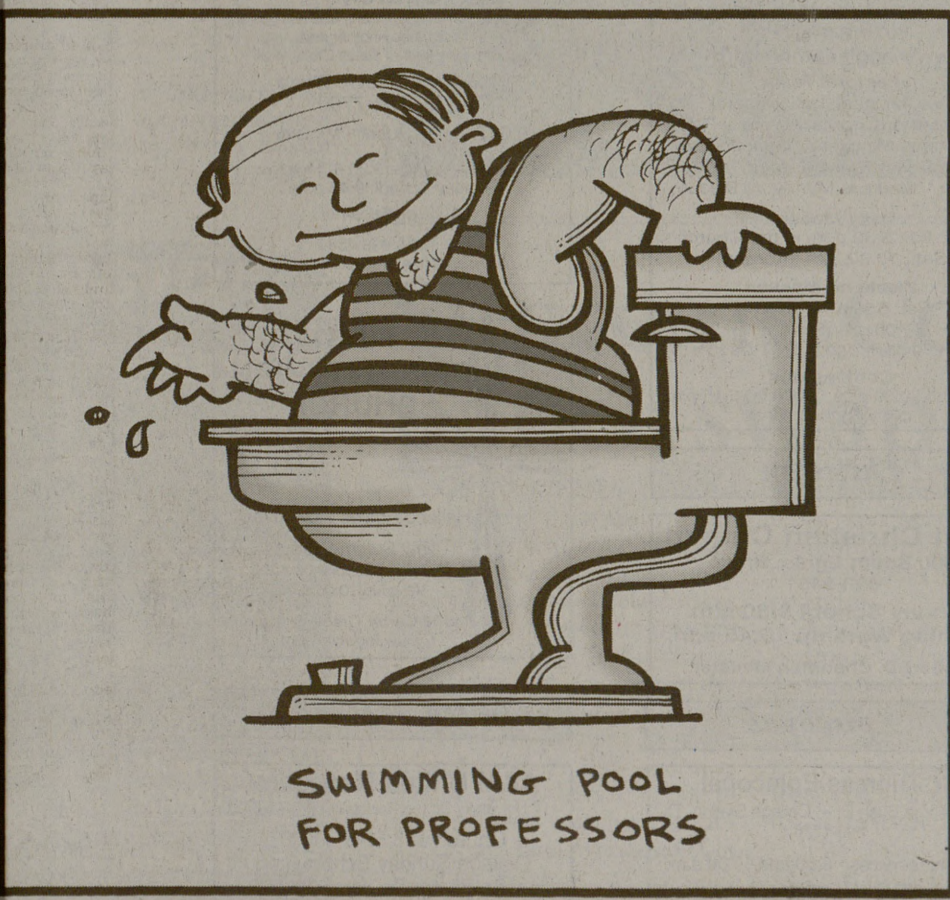
moved from the White House had he not been of Arab descent, just as his uncle probably would not have gone to prison for terrorism had he not been of Arab descent.

However, given that the Secret Service did realize its mistake and offer to readmit Alarian to the White House, it is believable that the agents involved did not mean any offense and probably did not consciously make a decision to treat Alarian as a terrorist. However, they did make a subconscious connection between his appearance and the American stereotype of Arab people.

In this case the mistake was merely an inconvenience. One should hope that is all this racist attitude will ever lead to.

Jason Bennyhoff is a senior journalism major.

CARTOON OF THE DAY



THE UN-CARTOONIST ©

Holier than thou attitude not needed

In response to July 2 mail call

After reading Kempf's column and the typical A&M holier than thou responses in the mail call section, I have found something worth mentioning. Sexual exploration is as important as social exploration in learning about different people and oneself. Sex does not have to be associated with love. If you choose to follow the commands of a fictitious character named God in a make-believe world called heaven, keep it to yourself, and allow people to behave within the laws of the society they are a part of.

Religion is personal to each individual and is not to be thrust upon others, nor is it the standard. For those who think saving themselves for a spouse is an act of respect, think about this: You do not learn from one teacher, one class, one friend, one experience — you learn from many. Some misguided sheep at A&M like to believe that the majority of students are not engaging in sexual behavior, but the truth is that sexually active people do not waste the time to

Mail Call

write about it in the paper. They leave that to the ignorant Bible quoters whose lives are so empty they have to worry about what everyone else is doing.

Mike Walkowitz
Graduate Student

Rules protect students from their coaches

In response to Jessica Crutcher's July 2 column.

Crutcher's opinion on student athletes is flawed and not based entirely on fact. As an undergraduate, I was a varsity athlete at a Canadian university where athletic scholarships are not given out. I do, however, have a number of friends who ventured to American colleges to compete and have their educations paid for. I look at the freedom I was allowed in the Canadian system as a privilege. I was able to set my own schedule and dedicate as much time to my sport or my school as I desired.

My friends did not have that flexibility. The article seems to imply that athletes have control to make their own decisions. As a student athlete on a scholarship in

the United States, your time is not your own. Your scholarship is tied to your coach's whims. You have to attend practices and do as your coaches dictate, or there is the threat that you may lose your scholarship. Not every coach believes that their athletes' primary concern is their education. Many of these rules would not be protecting the athletes from themselves but from coaches who do not respect the other reasons an athlete is at school. They should be student athletes, not athlete students.

Implementing these rules would give athletes the ability to prioritize their athletics as they see fit. If they want to use that extra time to study or go on an extra workout, they have that choice. While it may seem an individual's choice to accept an athletic scholarship, for many people, it may be the only way they can finance their education.

I feel that my experiences as an athlete enriched my university experience without consuming it. I hope that other athletes feel the same way.

Deidre Waite
Graduate student