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Politics

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THE BATTALION

Tuesday, September 11

New law affects B-C senior citizen homes

By COURTNEY STELZEL
THE BATTALION

With the support of state Sen. Mike Moncrief, D-Fort Worth, a new law designed to regulate assisted living centers went into effect Sept. 1. The law will attempt to regulate Texas assisted living centers like nursing homes, which are currently monitored by the Department of Human Services (DHS).

"Any law that lumps us in with nursing homes is a step in the wrong direction because we are not institutional, we are more like a private home," said Linda Mylam, owner of the Brazos Oaks Personal Care Center in Bryan.

The law allows DHS to fine the centers up to \$1000 per offense. Regulations were in place prior to the law, but there was not a government agency in charge of maintaining these standards.

"[The law] provides the Department of Human Services with the tool to enforce some of the regulations in place," said Katrina Daniel, legislative aide to Moncrief.

This law comes in the wake of a recent Houston accident involving two elderly residents drowning in an assisted living facility because of flooding caused by Tropical Storm Allison. Staff members had lied about accounting for all residents during the evacuation.

Daniel said this law will help ensure such incidents



ZANDRA ALFARO • THE BATTALION
Residents of Brazos Oaks Personal Care Center enjoy a game of Bingo in the center's common area.

will not happen again.

"You can't make laws to cover every extreme example," Mylam said. "I don't see how a \$1000 fine would have helped that situation."

Jane Rouse, administrator of St. Joseph Manor Assisted Living, supports the law.

"I think it's necessary, because when you're dealing with a geriatric population, you can't get enough help," Rouse said.

Rouse also said she was not worried about the fines that can now be imposed because they will not be an issue for their facility.

"People need to pay the price if they don't take care of their clients," Rouse said.

Daniel said that the law brought before the Texas last session, but it was because of a lack of time.

"This session we brought back, cleaned it up a bit, passed it without any kinks," Daniel said.

A committee was formed during the last legislative session to oversee the design of this law, she said.

"The committee took money from different regions of the state and the policy was the result of that work," Daniel said. "The law is designed to cover everything related to providing the residents with a safe environment."

Moncrief was unavailable for comment.



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THE BATTALION

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*Contact Editor in Chief Brady Creel, Managing Editor Mariano Castillo or Executive Editor Jen Bales if you have questions. Call 845-3313. Turn applications in at 014 (basement) Reed McDonald Building.

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