

EDITORIAL

THE VALUE OF STUDENT INPUT

On Wednesday, Texas A&M chose Dr. Linda Lekawski to replace the late Dr. Lucille Isdale as the director of Student Health Services. The hiring of Lekawski came amidst controversy regarding the candidacy of Dr. Scott Spear, who is a supporter of abortion rights and a former employee of Planned Parenthood. Many students, including members of Aggies for Life, expressed concern that Spear's political views would make him a poor fit for the primarily conservative A&M community.

Spear was not passed over because of his views, which would have been wrong. But students have the right to their views, and the administration has the right to hear them.

In expressing its views to the administration, the student body gave officials an opportunity to make an educated decision to include student concerns in the decision-making process. Students should be applauded for taking the initiative to provide their leaders with the information necessary to make a decision that impacts virtually every student on campus. As a vital part of the A&M community, it is important that Student Health Services have a leader the student body feels comfortable with. By providing the administration with feedback, students allowed the administration to do precisely that.

It is crucial that students take the time to express their concerns regarding campus issues if they want their opinions to be considered. Through open and honest communication, students not only have a heightened opportunity to make their mark upon this University, but they also develop a stronger relationship with A&M administrators.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Barton weak on issues

In response to the Feb. 28 editorial:

I hope students will take more into consideration when casting a vote than the recommendation made by *The Battalion*. To vote for Barton simply because he is an Aggie and understands Aggie traditions is absurd. It seems that in recent years, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (who graduated from the University of Texas) has been more of an advocate for Texas A&M than Sen. Phil Gramm (a former A&M professor).

Hutchison has secured important funding for research and extension projects at Texas A&M, and she was the one who read into the Senate record a tribute to Texas A&M on the University's 125th anniversary.

While Aggie traditions have their value, they also have their place. Congress should be concerned with the war on terrorism, taxes, social security and other national issues, not Bonfire, Fish Camp and other Aggie traditions. This is not a football game, this is our government. Responsible voters should choose candidates based on how the candidates will respond to those issues, not simply which school they graduated from.

Stan Pounds
graduate student

Students should vote in elections

Campaigns across the nation are watching Texas A&M and the District 31 race to see if we will make a difference in it. What they will find, and what was expected, is that the students do not care. Less than 100 students voted in the Republican primary by Wednesday, Feb. 27. I can't imagine the Democratic primary has received much more. There are more than 3,500 registered voters on campus alone. That doesn't even include the off-campus Aggies who are registered. This is our chance to make a difference in government. Texas A&M can choose the next U.S. and Texas representatives for our area, not to mention all the local officials. This gives us great power, and we should wield it!

Shannon Dubberly
Class of 2004

A&M makes bad business decision

In response to Richard Bray's Feb. 21 column:

Texas A&M's current policies toward the journalism department and Vision 2020 are ridiculous, not to mention bad business. There are currently more than 900 students in the Department of Journalism. This department has faculty and facilities for less than half of that number. For you economists out there this means the demand is greater than the supply. Instead of trying to correct this problem by hiring more faculty and improving the department, the University is positioning itself to get rid of the department altogether. The University is establishing its policy with problem departments right now. This policy, to simply be rid of the problem, will not make Texas A&M a top 20 school.

James Schneider
Class of 2002

Nick Rangel
doctoral student and teaching associate

A HOPELESS CASE

Lawsuit against bin Laden unlikely to succeed



CHAD MALLAM • THE BATTALION

The weapons used during Operation Enduring Freedom have included Marines, mines and missiles. But now another weapon is being introduced in the war against terrorism coming in the form of a lawsuit. In February, seven women who lost the men they loved on Sept. 11 filed a federal lawsuit against Osama bin Laden, Mullah Mohammad Omar, leader of the now-defunct Taliban, the entire al-Qaida network and the governments of Iraq and Iran, among others. The goal of the suit, according to one of the plaintiffs, Fiona Havlish, is to "bankrupt all terrorists." This is a truly noble goal — one that every American must support — but to try and seek legal action against these brutes will accomplish nothing.

Of course, one cannot help but feel compassion for these families. On Sept. 11, their lives were torn apart by a monstrous act of evil. No one could possibly imagine the type of pain or anger they must be going through. However, their lawsuit will have no impact on the war against terrorism and should not be pursued any further.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

The plaintiffs claim they wish to freeze terrorists' assets through the lawsuit, but millions of dollars in terrorists' assets already have been frozen. The United States and its allies do not need to be prompted by a lawsuit to properly deal with the terrorist threat.

The plaintiff's case asks for \$1 billion in compensatory damages and more than \$100 billion in punitive damages. In this area, these women are treading on thin ice. Already, there is a significant public perception that some of the Sept. 11 victims' families are greedy. This arises from complaints by some family members that the compensation they will receive as a result of the attacks is unsatisfactory. Unfortunately, a lawsuit seeking hundreds of billions dollars in damages will only add to that perception.

The likelihood that the women will ever see a nickel of this money is very small. So why should they risk their reputation on a lawsuit that Ellen Sarachini, another plaintiff, admits has only a limited chance for success? If it is vengeance they want, they should allow the might of the U.S. military to dispose of these monsters.

Another reason the lawsuit will have no effect is the sluggish nature of the nation's court system. Amazingly, there are still lawsuits to be processed from the previous World Trade Center Bombing. For example, after 400 individuals sued the Port Authority for the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the lawsuit was still pending eight years later. If it took eight years for this lawsuit to be brought to trial, it may be more difficult to seize the assets of many of the individuals and organizations named as defendants.

Although their lawsuit has virtually no chance of success, those who filed it should be commended for their grace and character. They have admirably refused to sue any American companies or individuals. Unlike the 1993 WTC bombing lawsuit, these widows see no point in seeking legal action against true heroes like the Port Authority. These are outstanding Americans with a worthy goal, but they are going about it the wrong way.

Collins Ezeanyim is a junior computer engineering major.

Pet owners guilty of murder

Two prominent San Francisco lawyers, Marjorie and Noel Knoller, have been charged with involuntary manslaughter. Marjorie Knoller also faces a harsh charge of second-degree murder and although the second-degree charge seems preposterous, it pales in comparison with the atrocious facts of this case. The suspected assailants are the Knollers' dogs. The bizarre circumstances have revealed extreme negligence and an incredible sense of arrogance on the part of the defendants. An environment of sheer hostility has arisen, giving the prosecutors an unbelievable opportunity to make an example of the Knoller's negligence and convict Marjorie Knoller of second-degree murder.



JENNIFER LOZANO

The story begins Jan. 26, 2001, when Diane Whipple, a 33-year-old lacrosse coach, arrived at her affluent San Francisco apartment and was attacked and killed by the Knollers' two 120- and 113-pound Presa Canarios. According to Rolling Stone, the first police officers on the scene found Whipple lying face-down, naked and covered in blood on the hall carpet in front of her apartment door. Shortly after finding the victim, Marjorie Knoller, also covered in blood, stepped out of her apartment. Knoller claimed she was walking her dog, Bane, down the hall when he lunged at the victim. She said she barely managed to lock Bane and his mate up in her apartment and was afraid to go back inside. It took animal control officers three dart tranquilizers and "catch" poles to walk Bane to a van, where they euthanized him a short time later.

Further investigation found that the Knollers were raising the Presa Canarios for a Pelican Bay State Prison inmate and feared leader of an Aryan brotherhood who had recently joined their family. Paul "Cornfed" Schneider, who they call their son, was

orchestrating a dog breeding operation called "Dog o' War" kennels from behind bars. According to ABC news, the two dogs had attacked a blind woman and a guide dog and had bitten numerous other people. The fact that the victim's clothing was completely stripped leads the prosecution to believe the Knoller's dogs had been trained to fight. In addition, a dog training book titled *Manstopper* that was in the Knoller's apartment during a television interview is now missing. Given this information, along with the bizarre manner in which the Knollers acquired these dogs, it is safe to say the Knollers should have known their pet was a lethal weapon. Like others who own lethal weapons, the Knollers were under the same obligation to exercise care for the safety of others. However, they blatantly ignored this obligation and were reckless in their regard for human life, much like drunk drivers who are often charged and convicted of second-degree murder.

Although the Knoller's claim Whipple provoked the attack by wearing a pheromone-laced perfume or by menstruating, the Knollers had no right to be keeping dogs whose breed is characterized as "dominant and highly aggressive" in an apartment setting where they would inevitably encounter unsuspecting children and adults.

A Website for Presa Canarios says that only "responsible people that have the know-how to establish a correct relationship" with them should be allowed to own these dogs. The Knollers obviously did not fit this description. Somewhere along their journey through law school, these educated people traded their common sense for arrogance.

Although convicting Marjorie Knoller with second-degree murder will be difficult, it is far from impossible and needs to be done to assert the court's intolerance for blatant disregard of human life.

Jennifer Lozano is a junior English major.