

Rocking the vote

Two A&M students campaign for justice of the peace against incumbent Boyett

By Erica York
THE BATTALION

Going to class, studying and taking tests is enough responsibility for most students, but for Jared Copeland, a senior political science major, school just isn't enough.

Copeland is running for Brazos County justice of the peace for the 3rd Precinct in the November election.

Copeland said college students don't have enough representation in Bryan-College Station's local government.

"There's no reason we shouldn't have a current Aggie as justice of the peace," Copeland said. "Being a college student and running for office in a college town makes sense."

Copeland said justice of the peace is a four-year term.

He plans on only taking one or two classes a semester and possibly pushing back his graduation date if elected so he can fully concentrate on the office.

"Running a campaign and staying focused on school has already been difficult, but I knew when I filed to run that it was going to be a lot of hard work," he said. "It's something I know I can handle."

Chris Durham, a senior genetics major and class of 2003 president, said the characteristics Aggies share, including honesty and integrity, can be powerful in a local office.

"I think because Aggies make up such a large percentage of the Bryan-College Station community, it's important to see Aggies moving beyond campus to get involved and represent their fellow students in local politics," Durham said.

Copeland said running as a democrat in Brazos County hasn't been an obstacle because most people realize justice of the peace is an office in

which political party affiliation doesn't matter.

"Our biggest obstacle has been not having as much money as we would like to run the kind of campaign we want," he said.

Copeland said he has spent more than \$4,000 on his campaign, but most of it has been donated by supporters.

Copeland is running against Republican George Boyett. Boyett has been justice of the peace for the 3rd precinct for 14 years, and Copeland is the first candidate to run against him, he said.

"Politicians in office too long can forget who put them there," Copeland said. "I feel that our campaign offers a chance for change."

Copeland said he decided to run for justice of the peace after hearing how George Boyett treated people.

"When I found out I lived in his precinct I knew I could do a better job as justice of the peace. I saw something that needed change and decided to do something to change it," Copeland said. "The more I thought about the idea, the more people pushed me and the more support I received."

Copeland said he had a lot of supporters willing to go with him to knock on more than 1,000 doors this summer as part of his campaign.

"Some of the people helping with my campaign wanted campaign experience, some I met randomly, and some just wanted to help after I told them I was running against Boyett," he said. "My supporters are a variety of people."

Copeland said he thinks he is more qualified because he would listen and be there for people. If elected, he would be required to attend a school for first-time justices of the peace for a month in Austin.

"I'm old enough to know what's right and what's wrong," Copeland

said. "There are former and current justice of the peace candidates who have taught me things."

Scott Fredericksen, a microcomputer specialist and Bryan resident, said he would feel more comfortable with someone as justice of the peace who had a little bit more life experience.

"As far as I'm concerned, a student would lack the maturity to handle that level of responsibility," Fredericksen said.

Though Copeland's campaign is directed toward the entire community, Copeland said the current focal point of the campaign is on campus. Ten thousand people live on campus and Copeland needs 4,000 votes to win, he said.

"If I could tell people one thing, it would be to register to vote," he said. "If students will turn out to vote, I'll definitely win."

Copeland said there are some specific things he would like to change if elected, such as extending court hours in order to have night and weekend court sessions to better serve students.

"I want to bring fairness and respect back to the office of justice of the peace," he said. "I want to treat individuals as individuals and not as revenue for the county."

After the campaign and his possible election to the office, Copeland said that he would like to go to law school and eventually pursue a career in politics.

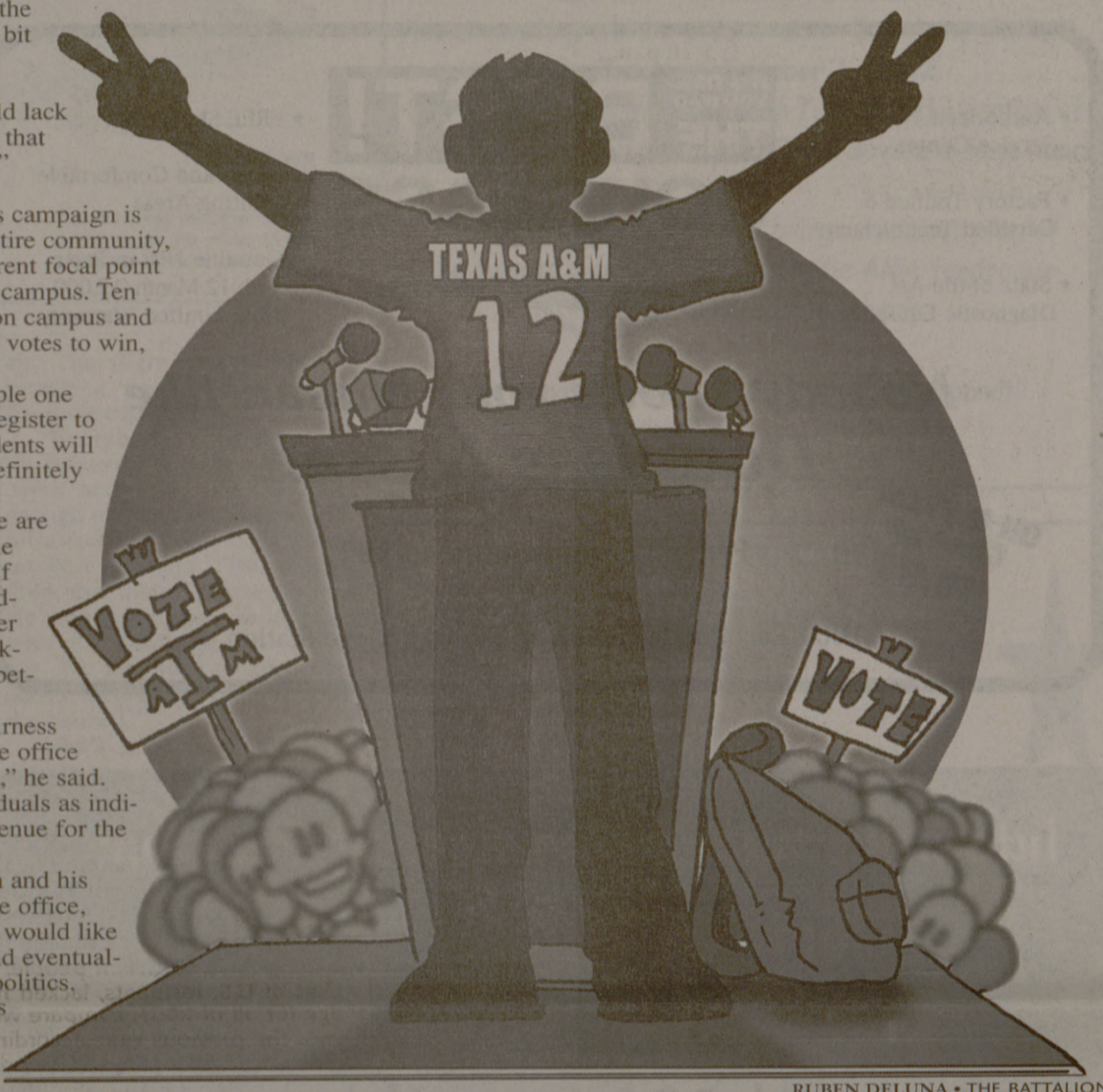
Early voting begins Oct. 21 and ends Nov. 1. Election day is Nov. 5, and students

can vote at the Memorial Student Center.

"I feel confident that I will win," Copeland said. "We've worked really hard for nine months now and it's down to the last few weeks. I'm confi-

dent that our hard work will pay off."

Stephanie Berlin, a senior psychology major, is also running for justice of the peace as a member of the libertarian party against Copeland and Boyett, but was unavailable for comment.



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