

# THE BATTALION

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## 'Scrap fire' may be included in senate proposal

By Janet McLaren  
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Vice President for Student Affairs J. Malon Southerland said he does not foresee the return of the Aggie Bonfire this fall, despite conflicting statements by other University officials on a Student Senate proposal that includes a modified version of the traditional Bonfire.

"In my opinion, there will be no Bonfire this year," Southerland said.

Southerland is part of a group of administrators evaluating a Student Senate proposal called Texas Aggies Building Spirit (TABS). If approved in its entirety, students would be involved in designing and building projects across Texas in partnership

*"Bonfire is not a part of this proposal."*

—Dr. Malon Southerland



*"The Bonfire decision is a part of TABS."*

—Dr. Robert M. Gates



with Habitat for Humanity. The leftover wood from the buildings could be used to make a scrap fire, similar to how Aggie Bonfire originally began, according to Kyle Carlton, junior business finance major and the external affairs chairman of Student Senate.

Southerland and Gates responded in markedly different ways when questioned on the TABS

connection to the return of a University-sponsored Bonfire.

Southerland informed student senators in a memo Jan. 14 that the "scrap fire" aspect of TABS as outlined in the proposal was not a viable option.

"The 'scrap fire' is impossible to support at this time," Southerland said in the memo. "More information and discussions are required related to this

particular aspect of the proposal."

"Bonfire is not a part of this proposal," Southerland said.

The final decision about TABS rests in the hands of A&M President Robert M. Gates.

While Gates said he was not ready to make an official statement on Bonfire, he did say that the scrap fire idea was being considered along with the TABS proposal.

"The Bonfire decision is a part of TABS," he said.

Director of the Memorial Student Center Jim Reynolds said he had no knowledge of a connection between Bonfire and the scrap fire that was a part of the proposal presented to a group of administrators

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## Wanna race?



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

Three-year old **Evan Howard** and two-year-old **Holden Howard** prepare to go down the slide at Castlegate Park in College Station Monday afternoon. The two brothers enjoy going to the park together to swing, slide, and most of all have a mock sword fight.

## Gates: A&M education still a bargain

By: Nicole M. Jones  
THE BATTALION

Addressing the Texas A&M Faculty Senate meeting Monday, University President Robert M. Gates said despite rises in student fees and tuition costs, receiving an education at A&M is "still a bargain."

Kiplinger Magazine lists A&M and the University of Texas as two of the top 100 "best deals" for education in the United States, he said.

Gates said he would like the state to take some of the financial burden off of college students.

"Increasing the cost for students and their families ought to be the last resort, not the first choice," he said.

Gates said that even with the current 7 percent budget cut and the 12.5 percent budget cut, equalling \$52 million for fiscal year 2004-2005, he wants to protect faculty, staff and students as much as possible.

Gates' three principles for approaching the budget cuts include protecting teaching and research, avoiding laying off personnel and offering as much access to research opportunities.

The lowest cuts will be in instructional programs, with larger cuts in special items and infrastructure, respectively, he said.

Gates said he welcomes suggestions from faculty members about how to effectively handle the budget cuts. Suggestions can be sent to the Faculty Senate office, he said.

Motions from the core curriculum council

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## A&M and UT unite for education funding

By Melissa Fowler  
THE BATTALION

On the athletic field they are fierce competitors, but the Aggies and Longhorns will unite in Austin today to work toward a common goal that could end up costing students more money in tuition fees.

Alumni and students from the two largest universities in Texas traveled to Austin Tuesday for the Orange & Maroon Legislative Day to lobby for higher education funding.

One of the main issues up before the state legislature is tuition deregulation, which would allow boards of regents flexibility with raising tuition rates without state approval.

Texas Exes Public Policy Coordinator Leticia Gonzales said the universities are lobby-

ing legislators for continued state support for current services, allowing universities to retain 100 percent of indirect cost and granting local control to state institutions to set their own tuition.

The grass roots effort relies on the personal accounts of former students to persuade politicians and communicate the value of a college education.

"We want to go to Austin and impress upon the legislature the importance of higher education," said Barry Hammond, Memorial Student Center Council president and senior economics major.

Joan Tatge, director of communications for the Association of Former Students at Texas A&M, said the schools' alumni are trying to find a way to promote their universities as top research centers.

"It is not so much issues-based but getting awareness out there of the value of Texas A&M and the University of Texas-Austin as premiere research and educational institutions that have impact well beyond the city limits of Bryan-College Station and Austin," she said.

Tatge said individual alumni are encouraged to speak their minds about issues such as tuition deregulation, though the Association of Former Students will not take a stance on the issue.

Volunteer recruiting practices of this effort have come under fire due to a recent e-mail from the Texas Exes Alumni Office dated Feb. 4, which was sent to the Texas Exes chapter and individuals listservs.

The e-mail said, "you do not have to be

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### Orange-Maroon Legislative Day

- When:** Tuesday, Feb. 11  
1:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
- Where:** State Capitol and Stephen F. Austin Hotel Austin, TX
- Who:** A&M, UT alumni and student leaders meet with legislators. Both university's presidents will attend
- Why:** To lobby for higher education funding and discuss tuition regulation

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SOURCE: ASSOCIATION OF FORMER STUDENTS

## End of Muslim holiday raises alarm

By Lecia Baker  
THE BATTALION

Campus security has not significantly increased in the past week, even though a national security alert was recently announced in conjunction with the Islamic holiday Eid-Ul-Adha, one of only two Islamic religious holidays celebrated yearly.

Intelligence reports have suggested an increased likelihood that the al-Qaida terrorist network may attempt to attack Americans in the United States or abroad at the end of Hajj, the Muslim religious period ending mid-February, according to

The Associated Press.

Faisal Chaudhry, president of the Islamic Community of Bryan-College Station, said the months of Hajj are known as the forbidden months in Islam because violence against humans, plants and animals is prohibited during this time period.

"Historically, people who have traveled (to Mecca) have gone over land and over sea, and the journey used to be long and arduous," he said. "It would take a matter of months to come and go back. To ensure that time was free from any threat of violence or disruption, security and peace was emphasized much more."

Chaudhry said any Muslim who

would attempt to use this occasion to engage in violence would be going "dead against" all of the principles and the spirit of the whole Hajj season.

Zahir Latheef, a sophomore computer science major and a practicing Muslim, said the majority of Muslims make a point to celebrate the Hajj without violence of any kind.

"There's about 1.2 to 1.5 billion people celebrating this holiday in a very peaceful and spiritual manner, and I would hope these kinds of terrorist alerts don't overshadow the real significance of the holiday," Latheef said.

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## Anti-terror law questioned

By Jesse J. Holland  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Democrats on Monday asked the Justice Department to explain reports that it plans to ask Congress to expand an anti-terrorism law to increase surveillance while restricting access to information and limiting judicial review.

House Judiciary Democrats called on Attorney General John Ashcroft to explain the existence of a copy of draft legislation called the Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003. The Center for Public Integrity, which posted the document online Friday, said it had obtained it from a government source.

Attorney General John Ashcroft said Monday that the Justice Department is working to figure out "what we can do to be more successful" in the war on terrorism. "We're going to do that on a daily basis," Ashcroft said.

The new legislation, according to the alleged draft, would prohibit disclosure of information regarding people detained as terrorist suspects and prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from distributing "worst-case scenario" information to the public about a nearby private company's use of chemicals.

The measure would create a DNA database of "suspected terrorists"; force suspects to prove why they should be

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