

EDITORIAL

NEEDLESS FEE HIKE

Students must vote it down

Year after year, the Student Service Fee increases without students' consent, but this week, students have the opportunity to put a stop to these runaway fee hikes.

The fee, which funds student programs such as the Memorial Student Center's committees and Student Activities, stands at \$142 per semester, and if approved by students, will rise to \$150. It may not seem like much, but if students vote for this deceptively small increase, they are authorizing the University to gradually raise the fee another \$100 without student approval. Although state law requires the University to hold a referendum when the fee passes the \$150 mark, subsequent increases of less than 10 percent do not require students' consent.

The spendthrift record of the Student Service Fee Advisory Board, which recommends to administrators the rate of the fee and how the revenue should be spent, should make students reluctant to give the board such sweeping authority to dig into students' pockets. With annual fee increases of 6-9 percent, the board has been quietly gouging students with rate hikes exceeding the cost of natural growth and inflation. If students approve this increase, they can expect the gouging to resume until the fee hits \$250.

In 2001, the board had a \$1 million windfall when, following approval of the transportation fee, student service fee money was no longer given to Bus Operations, yet the board still recommended a small rate increase that year. This increase is not to maintain current programs, but to pay for frivolous new initiatives — an absurd proposition in these times of budget cuts.

Students must not relinquish their authority over the fee just yet and should vote no on the student service fee increase.

THE BATTALION

EDITORIAL BOARD

<i>Editor in Chief</i>	BRANDIE LIFFICK	<i>Asst. News</i>	MELISSA SULLIVAN
<i>Managing Editor</i>	SOMMER BUNCE	<i>Member</i>	ROLANDO GARCIA
<i>Opinion Editor</i>	GEORGE DEUTSCH	<i>Member</i>	MATT MADDOX
<i>News Editor</i>	SARAH WALCH	<i>Member</i>	BRIANNE PORTER

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebatt.com. No attachments.

MAIL CALL

Aggies want Step Show off campus

In response to Sarah Walch's Feb. 25 news article:

I hope this is the last year we host this Greek Olympiad Step Show event. I realize A&M is trying to become diverse, but I don't think it's worth having bullets flying through the air.

We have hosted professional wrestling, the circus, concerts and many other events at Reed Arena. Some of these events drew people from all over the area. Some would say that a few of these events even attracted some undesirable types, yet I have no recollection of gunfire or even fights at those events. I hope this sort of "diversity" is not the future of this school.

Jeff Householder
Class of 2003

The events of early Sunday morning surrounding the Greek Olympiad Step Show are ironic following the "ghetto party" controversy a few weeks ago. The after-party was said to feature drinking, drugs, fighting, and guns.

Let's call it what it is — this wasn't a few random folks ruining the party for everyone else. This was widespread mayhem.

While no progress is made by perpetuating stereotypes with things like "ghetto parties," it seems clear now why stereotypes are hard to break.

My heartfelt sympathies go out to the legitimate organizers, participants, and sincere fans who now have to endure the shame enveloping this event. A lot of people ruined what could have been a wonderful time for many. As debt ridden as Reed Arena is, I hope the University declines events of this type in the future.

T. Bruce Hudak
Class of 2003

Thank you to a few helpful Aggies

Sometimes I think we need a reminder about just how special Aggies are.

Today in the 28 degree weather and the freezing rain, my car somehow got a huge bolt stuck in the tire. Within 10 seconds of me putting my hazards on and pulling over, two guys were there to help. In the freezing rain and kneeling in a puddle, they changed my tire for me so I could get home. I just wanted to say thanks, and that people like them make me so proud to be an Aggie.

Rachael Hines
Class of 2003

Students deserve an affordable education

I am thoroughly fed up with University departments nickel and dimming us to death. I have been in college a long time and I cannot recall a semester at any school that I have attended that there wasn't a fee increase. My outrage is not towards the "new student services fee" or any other fee specifically. It just seems to me that every time the University or a department or a student center needs more money that they come running to us, the student body. I would not pretend to know the inner workings of the University's financial department, but I would like to see an article in The Battalion about how a department needs more money and they are really trying hard not to come to the student's pocket books. I recommend that those of you who work for your tuition ask yourselves "Why do we need this fee increase?" An education, in this country, is a basic right. Everyone deserves an education. Not just the wealthiest 25 percent. The overall education of our people is what has made this country so great.

Matthew Hendrix
Class of 1999

Fiscal responsibility

'Sunset' bill would hold federal agencies accountable

A protracted slump in the national economy has led to drastic revisions of projected budgetary health. To help alleviate the problem, President George W. Bush has been calling for a second round of tax cuts to foster growth and investment. True to form, big-government liberals and spend-happy politicians have criticized Bush's plan as irresponsible, arguing that further tax cuts cannot be afforded. If these groups are truly concerned with the budget, they should start practicing restraint in spending.

But restraining federal spending has always presented a problem. As the nation has matured during the past 225 years, more citizens have sought help from government for things that used to be handled privately. With a growing dependence on and expectation of government help, many politicians have come to see the benefits of providing such assistance. To them, more spending often leads to more votes.

Certain entitlement-driven politicians and their beneficiaries refuse to acknowledge that increases in spending contribute to the deficit, and refuse to consider decreases in spending as part of a possible solution. As a result, any tax cuts aimed at revamping the economy are out of the question. But fortunately, there are many who have done the math and see the whole picture.

U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX) has advocated fiscal responsibility in Washington for years, repeatedly calling for passage of a "sunset" bill. Under this legislation, every federal agency would be sunsetted, or eliminated, after a certain period of existence unless Congress explicitly approved its renewal. This way, tax dollars that would have gone to an inefficient or unnecessary government bureaucracy could be redirected to better programs, used to pay off debt, or returned to American taxpayers.

Brady's sunset legislation would go a long way toward enforcing fiscal responsibility in federal agencies, in large part because it would force them to operate more like organizations in the free market, where mismanagement and inefficiency have real consequences. As Chris Edwards of the Cato Institute testified before



JERAD NAJVAR

Congress, the sunseting of agencies is akin to an enterprise in the private sector going out of business. When a business cannot provide services at a competitive level, it is eliminated as the market makes room for more efficient firms.

Placing the same stringent constraints on government enterprises would amount to a radical departure from the status quo. As former President Reagan said it years ago in a televised address, "The nearest thing to eternal life we'll ever see on the earth is a government program." Under sunset legislation, federal agencies would either prove their worth or shut down.

Some people may have a problem with such a radical move toward fiscal responsibility, perhaps because they do not believe government is really that wasteful. After all, new budgets must be approved each year by Congress and the President. However, egregiously wasteful allocations of tax dollars are still plentiful.

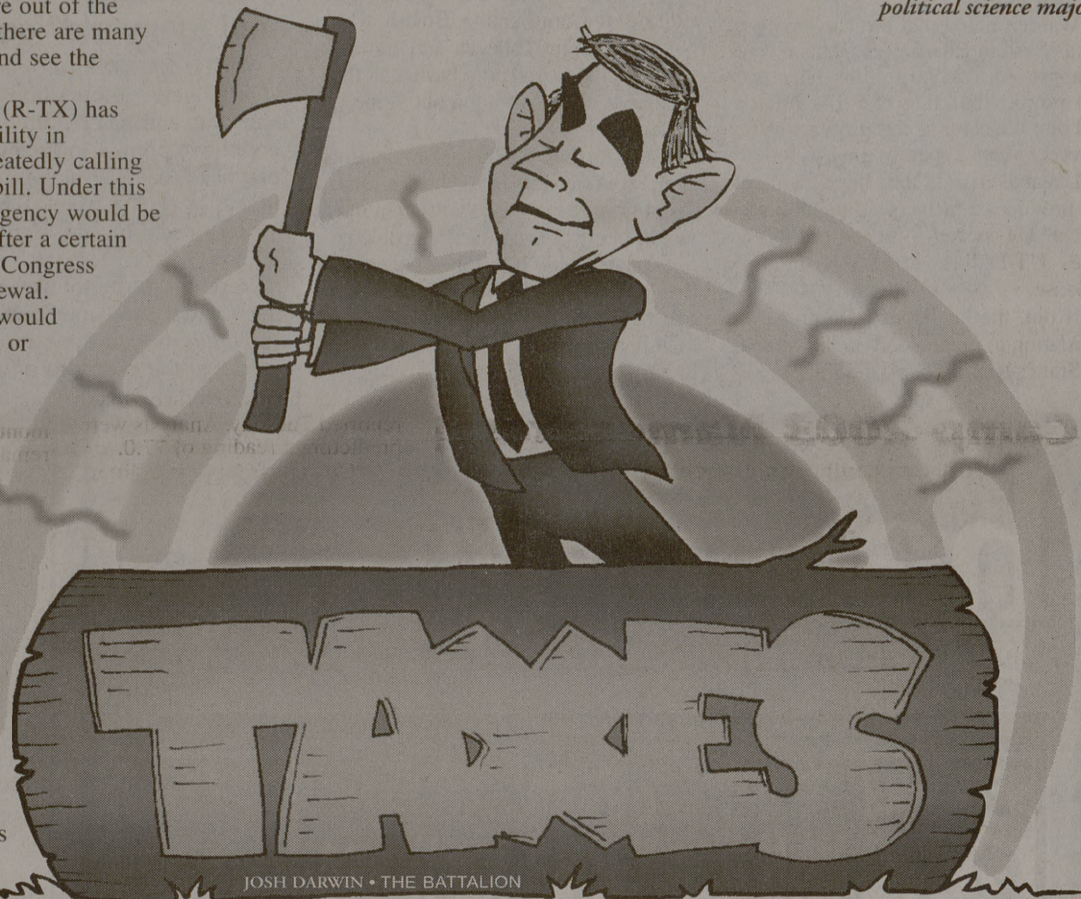
For example, Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW), a non-partisan group in Washington often looked to by Congress for waste-eliminating ideas, points to a study at Northwestern University funded by the National Institutes of Health. In the study, women

are paid to watch pornographic films to study their arousal level. Former Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders, most well-known for recommending that masturbation be taught in schools, speaks about the importance of the study. "We need to understand what stimulates women. And it's for their children's sake, for this country's sake," she said.

Under Brady's legislation, a commission would have been in place to inform the National Institutes of Health that pornography is not a vital national interest.

Given countless examples of waste such as this, the potential benefits of sunset legislation are enormous. In fact, CAGW estimates that \$1.2 trillion could be saved during the next five years if wasteful agencies and programs were eliminated or reformed. This is a significant amount of money that could be re-allocated or returned to the American taxpayers who contributed it in the first place. Although it is doubtful that any one piece of legislation could eliminate all government waste, Brady's sunset bill is a step in the right direction. If politicians really care about reducing the deficit, they can start by making this bill a law.

Jerad Najvar is a senior political science major.



JOSH DARWIN • THE BATTALION

Plastic surgery not for teens

Procedures can cause unexpected repercussions

It seems that Americans live in an image-obsessed society, where they often judge solely on the way we look. For many people, their teenage years are some of the most difficult. During this time, teenagers place a lot of their self-esteem and confidence in their physical appearance, and peers are often quick to judge by this as well. The growing trend of teenagers turning to cosmetic plastic surgery to change or improve their looks reflects the weight that our society places on a person's outer beauty. And while some plastic surgeries performed on adolescents are needed and warranted, many are not, and none of these procedures should be decided upon hastily. Careful thought and deliberation must be put into such an important decision due to the consequences, both good and bad, that can result from unnecessary surgeries.

Plastic surgery is not just for the rich and famous anymore, and the average age of the patients continues to drop. The number of people having cosmetic plastic surgery has tripled since 1992, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, with breast augmentation increasing 533 percent and liposuction increasing 313 percent. While young adults age 18 or younger made up only 4 percent of all cosmetic surgery patients in 2001, that is still an astonishing 303,103 people. More young people are having plastic surgery than ever, and this is not necessarily good.

Teenagers who express a desire to have plastic surgery are often trying to improve physical characteristics that they feel are awkward or flawed, and may achieve gains in self-esteem and confidence when these problems are corrected, according to plasticurgery.org. Certainly some cases warrant such an extreme solution, such as severe facial burns or scars.

But most cases do not. Take 15-year-old British teenager Jenna Franklin. Jenna brought teenage plastic surgery to the forefront of media attention when she asked her parents to have her breasts enlarged from a size 34A to a size 34C or D for her 16th birthday, and they agreed to pay for the surgery. According to news.bbc.co.uk, Jenna said she had made this decision at age 14, adding, "You've got to have breasts to be successful."

The fact that some parents and doctors are allowing procedures like this to be performed based on such ridiculous teenage motivations and whims is ludicrous. As Ruth Coppard, a child psychologist, told the BBC, "Emotionally, she (Jenna) is at risk by



LAUREL FRANCK

making a decision now when she's a child that will have long-term repercussions that she can't consider yet; she hasn't got the perspective."

According to brainevent.com, some cosmetic surgeries can be dangerous because foreign material, such as an implant, is inserted into the body and can be rejected. Plastic surgery is a heightened risk for teenagers because their bodies are still growing, changing, and developing, and it is not always clear how a procedure will affect the patient years later. Since the human body isn't always fully developed before a person turns 18, the cosmetic changes teenagers have done may change and possibly become distorted as they get older.

Some teenagers believe plastic surgery is a quick fix for their physical, and in turn, their emotional problems, and this simply is not the case. As brainevent.com states, "Looks don't directly translate into feelings. Plastic surgery may be a quick fix, but it doesn't prepare people for the things that can't be so easily snipped and tucked in the real world." Opponents to teenage plastic surgery feel that some teenagers are picking the easiest and fastest solution while actually avoiding the root of the problem, according to miami.edu.

The procedures themselves are also very expensive, usually as much as several thousand dollars, and the majority of such operations are not covered by health insurance.

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons has no formal position on cosmetic plastic surgery for teenagers, but does state on its Web site that the most rewarding outcomes are expected when the teenager initiates the request, possesses realistic goals, and has sufficient maturity. They must avoid unrealistic expectations about life changes that will occur as a result of the procedure, and not every teenager seeking plastic surgery is well-suited for an operation.

Plastic surgery cannot produce miracles, and if teenagers are going into it with that type of mindset, they are wrong. Cosmetic surgery shouldn't be a first option, and cannot be taken lightly. It will change the patient's life, and in ways they may not have expected.

Laurel Franck is a junior English major.

WORLD

THE BATTALION

ed in
sh

adquarters unit commande
iam Wallace.
cesman Bill Roche said
dquarters in Heidelberg
was still too early to spec
se of the crash.
safety team is already
Additional people are coming
Army Safety Center in Fort
Roche said.
are expected to be brought
y, Roche said.
er was one of two V Corps
participating in the exercise. The
safely.

an MH-60, an adapted ve
k Hawk, crashed in a trans
n miles east of Bagram Air
istan. Four members of a
riment were killed.
0,000 U.S. troops are train
ti desert in preparation for
n of Iraq. President Bush
to use force to disarm
apons of mass destruction
so voluntarily according to
s. Iraq denies it has suc

ls to
ecade

nsurer confidence

is a look at the Consumer
dence Index from a survey
000 U.S. households.
nally adjusted, 1985=100

Current 64.0
One month ago 78.8
One year ago 95.0

AM J J A S O N D J F

002 2003

E: The Conference Board

incomes.
e Present Situation Index
gauges consumers' sent
about current business
tions, dropped to 61.6
ary from 75.3 in January
atest time the index fell
lows was in November
when it slumped to 59.2

New York City's first offic
up with an official tally.
at if you have a problem
w what it's all about.
said Commissioner Lind
nds the Department of
s.

homeless numbers are
re than 38,000 homeless
ly in city shelters as of
re than the previous year.
oalition for the Homeless
at there is more we can

read the fine print.

BATTALION
CLASSIFIEDS

CALL 845-0569
PLACE YOUR AD