

UNNECESSARY ACTIONS

Rec Sports operational changes are spiteful, not needed to deter debt problems

The Department of Recreational Sports failed to pass an unnecessary fee referendum in February, and now like a sore loser, it is taking its ball and going home.



THOMAS CAMPBELL

Rec Sports has decided to save money by cutting some of the busiest hours in the Student Recreation Center, seeming a move to punish students for voting down its fee referendum.

According to section 54.539(e) of the Texas Education Code, as long as Rec Sports keeps debt on its books, it can still charge student fees. Once those debts are off the books, and it has been charging the fee for 20 years, it can no longer charge the \$78 Rec Sports fee for each student. Of the proposed fee referendum, 20 percent was going straight to debt restructuring. Also, by continually proposing building and expansion, Rec Sports guarantees itself to stay in debt.

According to Graduate Student Council meeting minutes, Dennis Corrigan, director of Rec Sports, assured council members that Rec Sports could keep functioning at current levels for two years without a fee referendum.

So in February, Corrigan told students that Rec Sports could continue for two years, but now in May, he is cutting some of the busiest hours out of the Rec Sports schedule. The Rec Center will close an hour earlier and open an hour later in the mornings during the weekends starting this summer.

Another part of the fee referendum was intended to increase student wages. Many student workers are not paid as well as Rec Sports workers. Sarah Schuler, Class of 2001, worked at Evans Library for three years while attending A&M. "The most I made at Evans was \$5.65, but the convenience of having a job on campus outweighed not making as much," she said.

Unnecessary jobs should be cut, and Rec Sports should be more streamlined.

Despite Rec Sports' great marketing campaign for its fee referendum, it forgot to tell students of the more than \$5 million surplus it refuses to use to keep the Rec Center operating at normal levels. If it is planning on saving it for a rainy day, they should consider the current budget crunch more than a drizzle.

Now through the Budget and Facility FAQ available online at resports.tamu.edu, Rec Sports is trying to blame the students who wisely voted down the unnecessary fee referendum for the change in hours. The fee is not needed, because of the more than \$5 million reserve money it has.

Rec Sports says that the reserve money is only for debt service and building renewal and modification, but surely \$5 million

more than covers that for the next two years, especially when it is only looking to cut \$200,000. By cutting so many hours, it would seem it is only looking to add more to its treasure chest surplus.

The change in hours is a punishment for students who voted down the referendum. If they were really more interested in cutting costs, Rec Sports would be trimming the fat by not cutting the busiest hours of the day such as closing at 11:00 p.m. instead of midnight during the week. Keep student workers at their current wages, let students swipe their own ID card as they enter, cut working hours for unnecessary shifts, find jobs that can be covered by more than one person and suspend raises until the budget crunch is over. Taking punitive actions toward the students not wanting to pay more for less is ridiculous.

Graduate Student Aerospace Engineering Representative Matt Wilkins said the Graduate Student Council has formed a committee to investigate Rec Sports' change of hours. "Dennis Corrigan spoke to GSC prior to the fee referendum seeking support and made statements in direct contradiction to published

statements in the current hours FAQ on the Rec Sports Web site," Wilkins said. "GSC formed a committee to investigate possible motives behind the changing of the Rec Center hours."

So far, Corrigan has worked well with the GSC committee, Wilkins says.

Corrigan and Rec Sports need to come clean with students. No more playing games and acting childish. Punitive hour changing is taking this much too far. Rec Sports has the money to keep their current hours, but they are acting underhandedly, and students should not support their decisions.

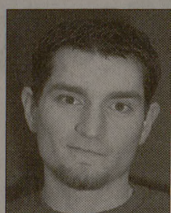
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Here's to your health Abstinance isn't only answer

Proposed health care policy is useless

American journalist P.J. O'Rourke once wrote, "If you think that health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it's free."



MATT MADDOX

O'Rourke was right — social-kills efficiency, and it is the public that ends up paying the price. Despite this, and the fact that the state of Texas now faces a multi-billion dollar budget-crunch, certain members of the Texas Legislature are looking to make Texas state health care "free." Free for illegal immigrants, that is.

Bills sponsored by Sen. Mario Gallegos and Rep. Rick Noriega that would destroy Texas health care are currently making their way toward passage in the Texas Legislature. House Bill 525 and Senate Bill 309 would amend the current law forbidding medical practitioners to bill the state for non-emergency health care provided to non-citizens. The bill reads, "As amended, a municipality, a county, or a public hospital may use money from local sources to provide health care services to a person regardless of their immigration status..." If this plan is implemented, the quality of the Texas health care will crash as the costs skyrocket.

In July 2001, then-Texas Attorney General John Comyn took action after receiving complaints that state hospital districts were violating law by offering free health care to illegal immigrants. Federal law only mandates that states cover the costs of health care to destitute illegal immigrants in emergency cases. The federal government then reimburses Texas for those emergency services provided. Comyn ruled that in the case of non-emergency care, the state legislature has jurisdiction to decide whether to fund free care for non-citizens. It is because of this ruling that current Texas law that Gallegos' and Noriega's bills were proposed.

Proponents of the bills argue that it will not cost Texas anything. According to a Legislative Budget Board report in regards to the bill, "No fiscal implication to the state is anticipated." However, during its investigation in 2001, the attorney general's office discovered that the Harris County hospital district alone had funded \$30 million in health care costs for illegal aliens during a three-year period. Since two-thirds of those costs covered by the Harris County hospital

district were non-emergency care, they were ineligible for a federal refund and Texas taxpayers were left holding the bag.

Oregon recently voted on Ballot Measure 23, which would have instituted a universal health care system in the state. Proponents argued that the program would benefit uninsured children. Business leaders argued that its increased costs would put parents out of jobs. Luckily, the proposal was defeated by a wide margin. This is one of the rare instances where Oregon might be able to teach Texas a lesson in common sense.

In Canada, where health care is provided by the government at the expense of taxpayers, the waiting period between visiting a general practitioner and receiving treatment was four months in 2001, according to the Fraser Institute. Offering free health care for the world means that Texas hospitals will be flooded with immigrants seeking expensive procedures and medical care, knowing that once they have been treated, they will not have to pay.

Overcrowded hospitals mean waiting lists with fewer skilled doctors to go around. All the while, the paying citizens of Texas will foot the bill through taxes and higher costs of their medical treatment. As the cost of health care rises, more patients will be unable to afford the treatment they require. Insurance rates, already unstable after a series of crises, will also rise, making health care increasingly difficult without government subsidy. When the government is paying, patients and providers will not hesitate to take an elective surgery or spend an extra week in the hospital. The route of socialized care is a vicious circle.

So long as Texas is a democratic republic, those elected to serve in the Legislature must represent their constituents, the citizens of Texas. The interests of non-citizens should not factor into their legislative decisions, whether they are from Mexico or New Mexico. Only those who pay into the Texas tax system should be able to take from it. Especially in this time of cuts to education and other public services, the cost of free health care is a price too high for Texans.

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The debate between abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education is not new, but with unplanned pregnancies and STIs abounding, the need for comprehensive education is greater than ever.



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY

According to the 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 45.6 percent of high school students nationally reported having had sexual intercourse at least once. There are one million teenage pregnancies in the United States a year, 78 percent of which are unplanned. The Guttmacher Institute reports that roughly four million new sexually transmitted infections (STIs) occur among U.S. teens annually. Half of the 40,000 Americans infected with HIV each year are young people under the age of 25, according to the United Nations.

When so much is at risk, shouldn't America's youth be provided with all of the correct information about sex? If the Bush administration has its way, the answer is no.

Abstinence-only sex education, which is being pushed by President George W. Bush, appears to be secure under legislation pending in Congress, according to the ACT UP Web site. By law, local programs will not receive federal money if information about contraception — beyond failure rates — is included. This pushes any chance of comprehensive sex education out the door, taking with it information that studies have shown to prevent unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS.

According to Surgeon General David Satcher, abstinence-only programs are less effective than comprehensive ones. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, students who receive comprehensive education are more likely to use condoms and other forms of contraception, delay the onset of sexual activity, have sex less often and have fewer sexual partners than their abstinence-only counterparts. Perhaps Bush should take a hint from Secretary of State Colin Powell, who on MTV last February urged America's youth to use condoms to ensure safe sex.

The argument for abstinence-only sex education is based on two points. First, contraception is not 100 percent effective, and second, that abstinence until marriage is the moral and proper choice. It is true that abstinence is the only method of guaranteeing the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and the contraction of STIs, but those who choose to have sex should be encouraged to use contraceptives and condoms.

When the time comes for a teen to decide whether to have sex, this most intimate decision will be his own, dictated by parental guidance, faith and self-knowledge. An hour long presentation by a stranger on abstaining from sexual activity will fail to be effective. Some teens do choose to have sex, and these teens should be equipped with all the right tools and protection to make it a safe act.

Abstinence-only legislation denies teens from getting the proper education needed for a healthy sexual experience. When it comes down to it, it encourages educators to withhold information from their students. Comprehensive sex education teaches abstinence as the only guarantee to prevent pregnancy and STIs as well as providing contraception as a beneficial backup. It is not the federal government's place to ban comprehensive sex education and to sacrifice the protection and health of America's youth for the upholding of moral values.

So what about abstinence-only being the moral and proper choice? This argument is fallible because not everyone believes that the act of sex is immoral or improper when committed in the correct circumstances. No one can deny the authority of the government to encourage what it defines to be proper behavior; it has the power to sustain the general welfare. However, denying important information about safe sex jeopardizes the health of many people, and it goes far beyond encouragement.

The intent of legislation funding exclusive abstinence-oriented education is to dictate people's most intimate decisions. The legislation says you have only one choice, abstinence, or no protection against the dangers of the alternatives even though they do exist and protection could be provided.

The U.S. government cannot expect all of its citizens to just stop having sex to prevent unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. If conservatives are committed to lowering the occurrence of abortions performed in America, the government cannot hide the means for having safe sex from adolescents.

When it comes to discussing sex, there should be no secrets. All of the information about sex — the dangers and the risks, the irreplaceable benefits of abstinence and the effectiveness of contraception as a safeguard from pregnancy and STIs — should be talked about, because it is what teens do not know about sex that could hurt them the most.

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