

## Attention Gov. Rick Perry

### Tuition deregulation will hurt Texas A&M University and potential Aggies

With the 20-day deadline to veto bills nearing, there is one piece of legislation that Gov. Rick Perry should take a second look at before adding his signature. HB 3015, the bill that would give unelected regents unlimited tuition-charging ability, is perhaps the worst idea ever for Texas A&M and public higher education. As one Aggie to another, Gov. Perry please veto tuition deregulation.



MATT MADDOX

A&M's heritage is one of an affordable public college serving students of all economic classes. This has been possible through low tuition rates established by the Texas Legislature. Now, for the first time in the University System's 127-year-history, the Legislature is willing to forfeit its control to regents. University officials have assured the public that they will not take advantage of their new power and price gouge. However, Harrison Keller, senior policy analyst for Texas House of Representatives Speaker Tom Craddick and a major force behind the bill has said otherwise, stating that, "Students should pay whatever the market will bare." If unlimited tuition passes, it is simply a matter of time before rates are raised beyond what the public and the Legislature deem acceptable. There is no other reason for transferring the decision-making power out of the hands of the Legislature.

Some proponents of the plan to surrender tuition-setting power to bureaucrats have even fooled themselves into believing that the plan is "deregulation." Deregulation means more capitalism and less government.

But this is not the case with unlimited tuition. Tuition deregulation simply takes the power from one government body that answers to the public and gives it to one that does not. Tuition deregulation is not free-market, but instead a license to spend. Despite being assured that the Board of Regents listens to the public, we saw how much the regents cared when current and former student organizations spoke before the

Board during the A&M presidential selection process in 2002.

With unlimited tuition comes a number of negative consequences. Fewer students will be able to pay their way through college, meaning more students will require financial aid or be forced out of A&M. The current deregulation plan includes a 20 percent additional rate hike for the expressed purpose of subsidizing lower-income students. This takes one out of every five new dollars raised

ment if unlimited tuition is passed, preventing Texans from receiving a future education at the current college price.

Another blow to A&M under unlimited tuition is the loss of its competitive pricing advantage. As the cost of attending A&M nears the cost of attending any out-of-state or private school, the University will lose its greatest

cap on how much regents may charge students. There is no need for the Legislature to divest itself of its tuition-setting power. If schools need the tuition hike, then simply give them one.

While regents have requested more funding from the Legislature since the earliest days of the University system, only recently have increases in the costs of attending A&M far outpaced inflation. This wave of spending is in the name of the Vision 2020 plan, goals based on the highly discredited U.S. News & World Report university rankings. This year, deans at 178 law schools around the country signed a letter criticizing ranking systems for being arbitrary in the importance they place on the criteria they compare schools with. "A ranking system that exemplifies the shortcomings of all 'by the numbers' schemes is the one produced annually by U.S. News & World Report," the letter read. Newsweek editor Kenneth Auchincloss wrote, "Rankings generate huge hype, which is far more likely to serve the publisher's purpose than the readers..." Hype is not an important enough objective to make higher education unaffordable.

Only during a year of budget crisis did our elected officials consider giving away their responsibility to set tuition caps. Perry should hold off on signing HB 3015 into law, allowing legislators to make such a choice later, when they aren't brow-beaten by special interest groups fearing funding cuts.

Hopefully Perry will see through this power play disguised as deregulation, so that Texans of all economic levels will be able to afford to call themselves Aggies.

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through deregulation and puts it directly into the pocket of another student. This kind of socialism means middle-income students will pay a higher price for the same education as their lower-income peers.

Additionally, any benefits realized by the 20 percent provision will be offset by the demise of the Texas Tomorrow Fund, a program that has allowed thousands of Texas families to pay their way through college. The state comptroller has already said the program will have to end enroll-

means of attracting top students. When future Aggies no longer save money by attending a public university, the best and brightest students will have fewer reasons to attend A&M, effectively causing a brain-drain of the best students out of the A&M System.

Proponents of the bill have painted it as a do-or-die situation. They say that without unlimited tuition, A&M will face large budget cutbacks. This is simply not true. If the universities need more funds, the Legislature can simply raise the

## Fetal rights undermine privacy of women

On May 7, U.S. Rep. Melissa Hart, R-Pa., reintroduced the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, a piece of legislation that pro-life groups and lawmakers have been clamoring, but failing, to pass for the past few legislative sessions. They are likely to succeed this time, however, because they have help—from Laci Peterson and her unborn child. The pro-life legislators who sponsored the bill have gone so far as to call it "Laci and Connor's Law," showing they are not above exploiting the tragic death of a pregnant woman to get what they want—the demise of a woman's right to choose.

Laci and Connor's Law does nothing to protect pregnant women from violence or homicide, and because it only applies to federal crimes—those committed on federal property—the bill itself will be used little. The only effect it will have—which indeed is its true purpose—is to establish the personhood of an unborn fetus.

The Unborn Victims of Violence Act

would make the harm to or death of a fetus during the commission of certain federal crimes against the mother a separate offense. It would give a "child in utero" at any stage of development in the womb, from little more than a week after conception to birth, the same legal rights as everyday Americans.

The passage of this law is dangerous for women. Not only does this fetal rights principle undermine a woman's right to decide her own reproductive future, it directly pits her fetus' interests against her own. By establishing a fetus as a separate entity from the mother while still inside her body, it effectively turns a pregnant woman into little more than an incubator.

A perfect example of the government trying to turn women into incubators is currently taking place in Florida. A 22-year-old severely mentally retarded woman known as J.D.S. was raped in a



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state mental institution, resulting in a pregnancy. Forcing a pregnancy on a young rape victim who can neither understand nor handle her condition is disgusting, yet that is attempting to do. He has vowed to force J.D.S. to continue the pregnancy with complete disregard for what is best for her, and has tried to get a guardian appointed for the fetus.

This is not the first attempt to give a fetus full legal rights. On Oct. 2, 2002, new Department of Health and Human Services guidelines extended State Children's Health Insurance Program benefits to fetuses, but not to the pregnant women themselves. The idea that a fetus has insurance coverage not available to the mother is ludicrous and completely unworkable.

According to The Orlando Sentinel, 26 states have laws similar to the Unborn Victims of Violence Act. These

laws have been used to prosecute women for behavior that is potentially harmful to a fetus.

South Carolina, for example, has prosecuted between 50 and 100 women for such behavior, according to the National Advocates for Pregnant Women. Women who have been deemed to put a pregnancy at risk have received as many as 10 years in prison, even though they gave birth to healthy children. The parents of a 13-year-old girl were arrested for failing "to get proper care for the fetus" after their daughter's pregnancy resulted in a stillbirth, according to The Associated Press. A woman was arrested and charged with homicide by child abuse after a miscarriage, and even though there was no evidence of drug abuse in the case, the prosecutor called the miscarriage a crime the woman had to take responsibility for. One woman was even prosecuted for not following her doctor's order to remain on bed-rest.

Laci and Connor's Law specifically

exempts women from prosecution, yet the fetal rights issue is a slippery slope. Pushing the principle that a fetus is separate and that harm to it should be punished as though it was a full person leaves the door open for the government to amend the laws and start prosecuting pregnant women as well.

Laci Peterson's murder and the death of the fetus was tragic, but it should not be used to pass legislation dangerous to women. The Unborn Victims of Violence Act is a clear step in the path to undermine women's privacy rights. A fertilized egg—which would be a "child" under the law—is not a child and should not be granted equal or more rights than the mother. The interests of a fetus should never be put above the interests of the woman carrying it.

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## Lack of jobs leaving graduates in a lurch

### Economic slump forcing collegians to rethink plans and continue education

(U-WIRE) COLLEGE PARK, Md. — I knew getting my first job would be tough. As a college senior and aspiring newspaper reporter, I've scrolled through hundreds of journalism job listings on a bevy of Internet sites — JournalismJobs.com, Editor and Publisher online and whatever else showed up on the Yahoo! keyword search: Newspaper Employment.

I'm not a seasoned journalist, but I have experience with college media and reporting internships in a Pennsylvania county seat and the heart of London. I'm passionate, eager to learn and ready to relocate. And so I boldly entered the fray this February, sending cover letters, resumes, and clips to nearly 40 local and regional newspapers nationwide. All had advertised an entry-level opportunity and most promised, "Recent college grads welcome."

I heard back from five. Only one wanted to meet with me — a medium-sized daily in a two-newspaper town.

The position offered a pittance of a salary. From past trips to the region, I remembered the coverage area as lifeless, a mix of muted farmland, rotting trees and rundown, red-brick buildings. I immediately accepted an interview. I knew how fortunate I was to even be making the trip.

The recently graduated class of 2003 is educated, fresh-faced, fearless, ready and waiting, waiting, waiting. The almost complete lack of growth-potential positions greeting us is overshadowing our personal excitement and altering professional plans.

Along with classmates, I've watched the Dow Jones tumble since

Sept. 11. I've seen frequent television reports outlining the layoffs, hiring freezes and cutbacks infecting the current job market. I've read more and more about major companies turning like college textbooks to Chapter 11.

The syrupy slow market, along with a post-Sept. 11 sense of urgency in fulfilling goals and dreams before it's too late, has impelled more collegians than ever before to continue their education. According to the Associated Press, graduate programs across the country report spiking admission rates, especially in areas of business, law and education.

To hedge my bets, I joined the higher education onrush in early December, applying to six graduate journalism programs. This university accepted me in mid-May. The excitement of the next step and the school's standout reputation swelled within me.

And so, I awoke on a recent weekday earlier than freshman year's dreaded 8 a.m. I sped along interstate in a tired, nervous stupor to interview for the reporting position on-site. My thoughts, meanwhile, were a hundred miles away, filled with an image of rejection.

A fellow college senior, who wants to work in broadcast journalism, had his dorm walls splattered this past semester with white and beige rejection letters. The collage of "We're sorry to inform you" and "More experience needed" is a disheartening picture for undergraduates to behold.

There are exceptions, of course. Last fall, my classmate Kyle massaged contacts and exhausted leads to land a high-paying post-grad

position at a Big Four accounting firm.

Yet he too saw the rarity that is his secure future, in a Veterans Stadium super box during an early season baseball outing.

The waiter serving him popcorn and drinks was a friend from his hometown, two years older and a business-track graduate from a respected university. In his senior year of high school, he'd been voted "Most Likely to Succeed." Six years later, Kyle was tracking him down during the seventh inning stretch of a Phillies game. He needed an extra straw.

I lurched into the newspaper building's parking lot with my stomach and fuel tank running on empty. I sat down to wait in the reception area and perused a newspaper article on how war in Iraq and feared homeland terrorism were expected to paint an even bleaker economic picture. I sighed. I knew getting my first job would be tough.

Two weeks later, the e-mail appeared. "We're sorry to inform you..."

I enrolled at this university soon after. The experience will hopefully prove priceless. But for now, as the economy has dictated, I'm the one who's going to pay.

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