

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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ETHICAL DILEMMA

Perry must not veto House Bill 1606, which promotes financial responsibility

The recent commendable work done by the Texas Legislature will either go to waste or help in the reformation of crooked politics. What will happen depends on whether Gov. Rick Perry chooses to exercise his power of veto over House Bill 1606, an ethics bill that challenges city officials and various other local leaders by holding them financially accountable.

Despite the fact that the bill passed overwhelmingly in the House and Senate, those whom the bill would affect, such as Lubbock Mayor Marc McDougal, are calling for a veto, according to the Houston Chronicle. However, should Perry veto this bill, it would not only encourage conflicts of interest, but would remove the checks and balances that are necessary to ensure that no corruption of office is taking place.

The bill requires local city officials, school district trustees and port and sports authorities in towns with populations of more than 100,000 to complete a personal financial disclosure form that indicates other sources of income such as real estate and stock investments. It also monitors campaign funding, requiring the identity of contributors to be revealed as well as the cash balances. Legislators who are lawyers are also prevented from representing a client before a state agency.

Nothing about this law is intrusive for individuals who accept these roles. As a community leader, one should expect to be held to a higher standing and to be in the public eye. As a result of this, it should be known if an officer



SARA FOLEY

is supporting a piece of legislation merely because it benefits his own real estate holdings or financial condition, or if it benefits the community as a whole. Conflicts of interest should be avoided in all areas of work, and while in the

realm of politics it might be impossible to evade them completely, having them recognized would be an improvement. This bill would restore public faith in government officials and political campaigns; whereas, a veto by Perry would be a stark affirmation that deception in offices exists and will continue.

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Those who have publicly opposed this bill, such as McDougal and two other Lubbock city councilmen, wrote letters to Perry vowing to resign if the legislation passes. They are protesting that the new legislation will discourage people from running for low-paying or part-time positions, according to the Chronicle. Those who the public would desire to fill a

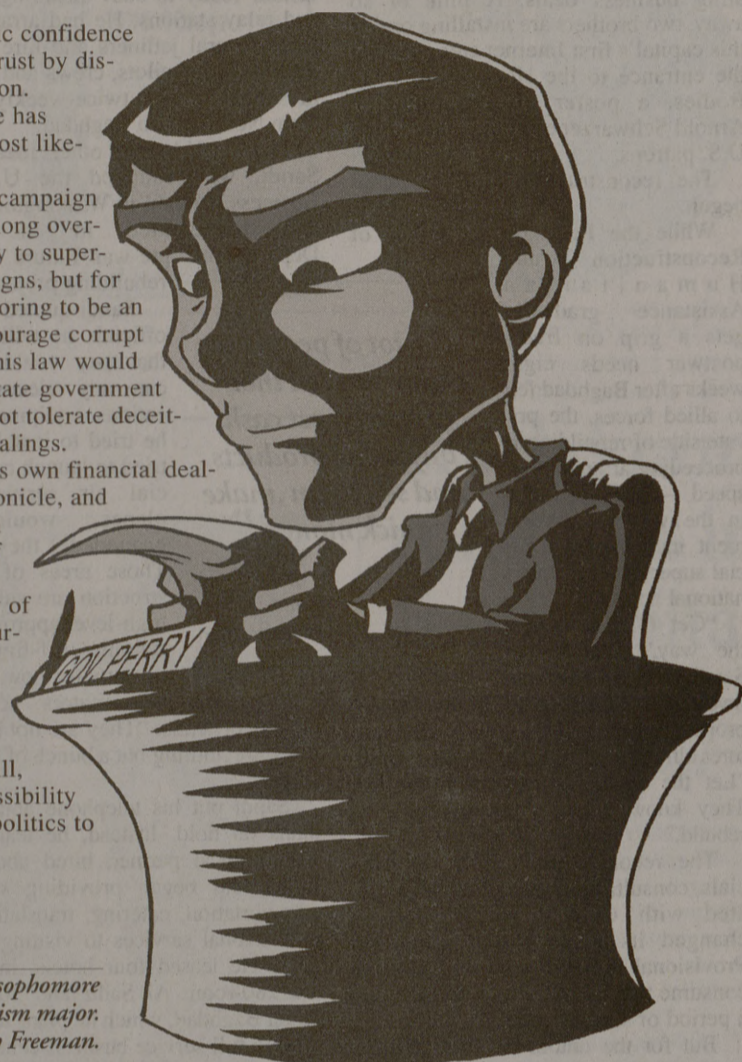
position that requires public confidence should be willing to gain trust by disclosing financial information. Furthermore, if a candidate has something to hide, he is most likely unfit for office.

This law also monitors campaign finance, a measure that is long overdue. It's necessary not only to supervise the funding of campaigns, but for this supervision and monitoring to be an openly known fact to discourage corrupt dealings. The passage of this law would show the integrity of the state government by professing that it will not tolerate deceitful or crooked financial dealings.

Perry discloses all of his own financial dealings, according to the Chronicle, and should expect no less from those under him. A veto of this bill would not only be detrimental to the integrity of local politics, but would further peoples' distrust of government officials.

Perry needs to uphold the decision made by the legislatures and sign the bill, instead of allowing the possibility of a vast improvement in politics to dissolve.

Sara Foley is a sophomore journalism major. Graphic by Seth Freeman.



Achieving diversity can be problematic

New vice president for institutionalized diversity must avoid others' failures

Barring any unforeseen issues, Texas A&M will take a step forward this fall with the installation of the first vice president for institutional diversity. This new position can, and should, bring sweeping changes to the campus. However, the path to diversity at A&M is built on fragile ground — any misstep in the process will undoubtedly cause more harm than good.

Fortunately, yet somewhat unfortunately, this university has a clean slate to meet the challenges of diversity with. Because this issue is one that has been attacked aggressively only in recent years, failures in the process of diversification have not occurred to such a degree as to hemorrhage the campus community. But, the failures that have occurred at other schools have taken their toll on those campuses, and A&M's leaders must learn from these mistakes.

Fox News recently reported that



MICHAEL WARD

universities across the United States are increasingly supporting segregated student events, stating that, “Vanderbilt, Stanford University, and the

University of California are among those that offer separate graduation ceremonies for minority students. Other schools, including the University of Michigan and University of Pennsylvania, have separate ‘celebratory events’ for black, Hispanic and Asian-American students.” However, graduations are not the only events that have become distorted. Stop Hate on Campus, a student organization at the University of Colorado, held a workshop last month in which white students were not allowed to attend.

Leaders in the field of diversity, such as the co-director of Harvard University's Civil Rights Project, Gary Orfield, believe these actions are not only acceptable but commendable. Is this the new face of

“diversity” — an exclusionary, vile ethos?

Even the poster child for college diversity, The University of California at Berkeley, is facing a crisis on its campus. In UC Berkeley's student newspaper, the Daily Californian, Jesse Gabriel, president of the student government association, offered some harsh criticisms of the current climate at Berkeley.

“UC Berkeley often touts diversity as one of its greatest strengths, but such claims seem empty in the context of the racial polarization that exists on our campus,” he said.

“While embracing and celebrating one's cultural heritage is one of the most important parts of the college experience ... it is important that students realize that such activities and cross-cultural interactions are not mutually exclusive. In this respect, the Balkanization of our campus is disturbing in that it limits opportunities for learning and for the creation of a larger sense of community on

campus.” Is A&M poised to suffer the fate of “Balkanization?”

But just as the various universities' acceptance of these events is a grotesque perversion of anything resembling a diverse campus, so too is the backlash from white students that has resulted. White-only scholarships and graduations are just as troublesome and disheartening to race relations as their minority counterparts are. It is exactly this frustrating polarization, or “Balkanization,” that has engulfed universities around the country and could certainly strangle A&M if left unchecked.

These events show that diversity built on the ratios of the populace is merely superficial. The fact that Berkeley, for instance, can have far superior numbers of racial minorities than A&M, yet still have severe racial problems on campus, proves this. Simply increasing minority enrollment at A&M will only enlarge the self-segregated masses,

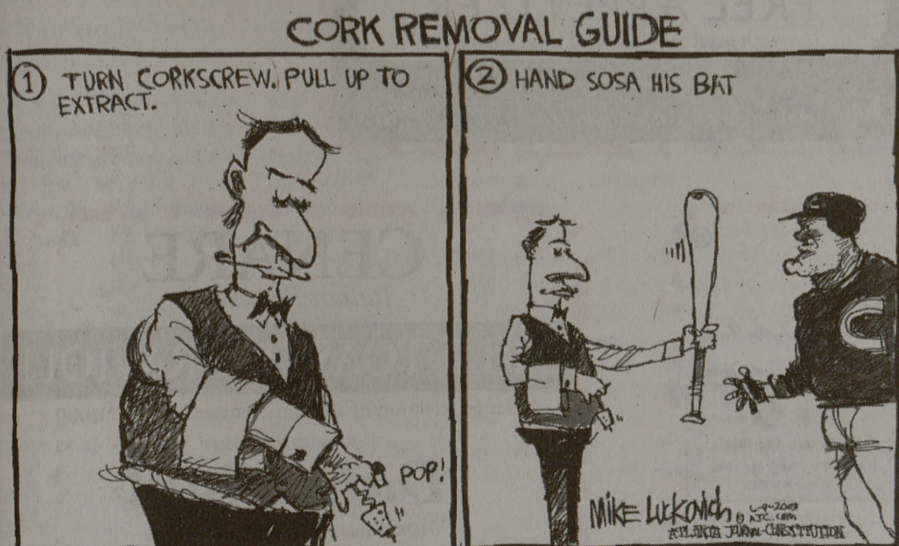
should A&M's culture move in that direction. However, A&M does not have to follow other universities whose paths to multiculturalism and diversity have degenerated into segregation and squabble.

This university has something rivaled by only a handful of other major colleges around the nation: spirit.

Many A&M students and teachers may believe that this spirit is a trite self-delusion, but no one can deny that this campus is different. For better or for worse, A&M is a very unique academic institution. Campus leaders must build on the camaraderie of being an Aggie. It is from there that celebrating and elucidating the differences among Aggies will be most successful.

Michael Ward is a senior history major.

MAIL CALL



Bush's tax cut will work if given time

In response to Midhat Farooqi's June 10 column:

The game of politics is just that: a game.

Politicians such as George W. Bush and Ari Fleischer are compelled to give speeches that give hope to every American even if they are not very educated in economics, which most are not. Therefore, the statements they make cannot be taken literally and analyzed word for word.

Bush proposed his plan in a manner that will hopefully get him re-elected in 2004 so that he can continue to be one of the best presidents our country has ever had. Bush has an MBA from Harvard and understands economics better than anyone.

He recognizes that economic change takes time and that the benefits of his tax cut will not be seen for several years.

By putting money in the hands of the affluent, more funds will be pumped into the American economy, not saved in a Swiss bank.

Those who earn a large amount of money each year earn it for a reason. They have taken advantage of a capitalist society and will continue to do so in the future.

As a result, new businesses and new jobs will be formed giving middle and lower class citizens better jobs and more money. Once these jobs have been secured, it is almost certain that tax breaks will not be given to the rich until the next economic downturn occurs; exactly when this type of action is needed.

American workers are the greatest economic strength, at

home and abroad. I'm not sure which economic theory states that lower income people will spend tax cut dollars because it is very false.

These people are much more likely to save the money and pay off their credit card bills until they secure a better future; a future that is created by the entrepreneurs who saw immediate fiscal benefits from the tax cut.

Unlike most of us, millionaires are not concerned with saving money, but prefer to continue building empires because they can have everything they ever wanted and have enough funds left over to be on the cover of Fortune. It is only a matter of time before Bush's tax cuts better the economy.

Alex King
Class of 2003

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