

## Those money woes

### Higher Education and Affordability and Equity Act helps manage student costs

More than 50 years ago in his Commission on Higher Education, Former President Harry Truman declared that "the American people should set as their ultimate goal an educational system in which at no level — high school, college, graduate school or professional school — will a qualified individual in any part of the country encounter an insuperable economic barrier to the attainment of the kind of education suited to his aptitudes and interests." To many college-bound American students today, this economic barrier is still real. In many unfortunate circumstances, the sole obstruction between young men and women and the substantial benefits of a college education is not a lack of intellect, but a lack of wealth.



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY

In a country in which higher education has become a requisite for a middle-class income and standard of living, access to this education should be an aspiration within the reach of all who exert themselves. In an admirable act of bipartisanship, Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., and Rep. Phil English, R-Penn., have sponsored a bill that will make paying for college less arduous for young people and their families.

The Higher Education and Affordability and Equity Act, as a whole, provides needed tax relief to students and parents paying for college. One of the more important facets of the act is the permanent retention of the educational provisions included in the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001. Taken together, these education provisions will provide more than \$29 billion in benefits over 10 years, according to the American Council on Education.

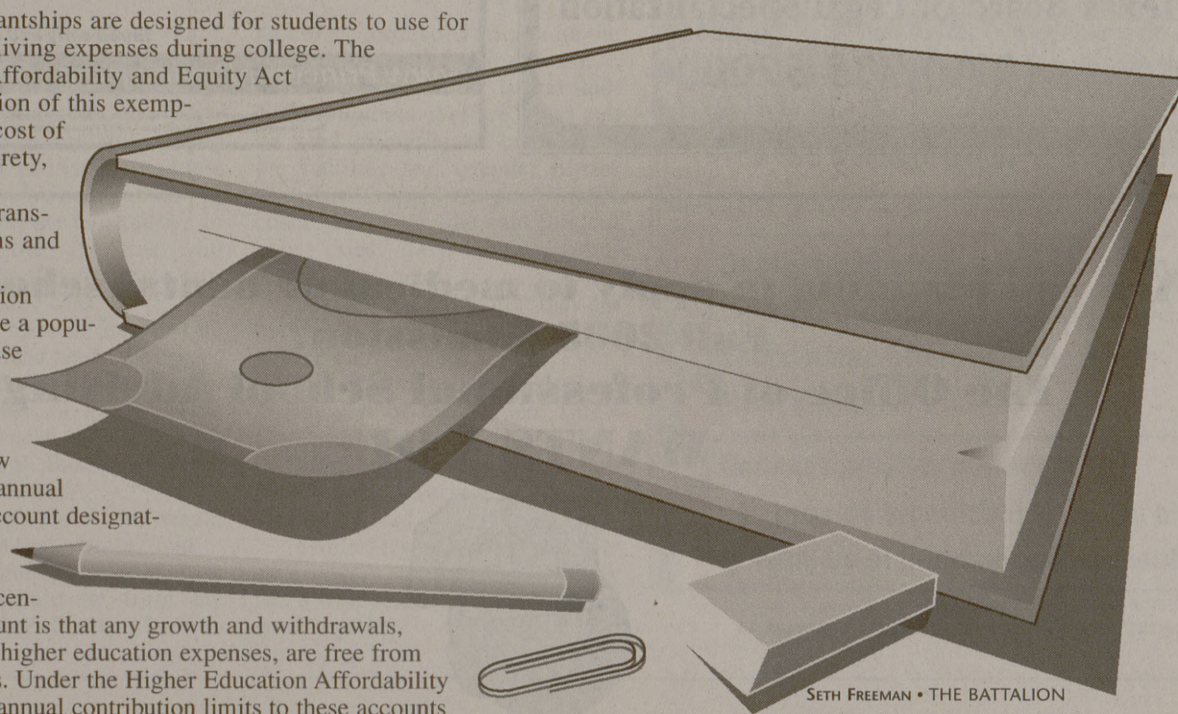
Currently, the Student Loan Interest Deduction caps the amount of interest on student loans that can be deducted from a person's taxes at \$2,500. All college students have heard horror stories from former students who, years after graduation, are still paying off student loans and the consequential interest. If passed, the Higher Education Affordability and Equity Act would expand the Student Loan Interest Deduction to allow borrowers a full deduction of the interest on their student loans.

At present, all scholarships, fellowships and grants are only tax exempt if used for tuition, required fees and books.

However, the assistantships are designed for students to use for the general cost of living expenses during college. The Higher Education Affordability and Equity Act proposes an expansion of this exemption to include the cost of education in its entirety, including room and board, computers, transportation, meal plans and research expenses.

Coverdell Education Savings Accounts are a popular method parents use to save money for their child's future college education. These accounts allow persons to make an annual contribution to an account designated for a specific student under 18 years of age. The incentive of such an account is that any growth and withdrawals, if used for qualified higher education expenses, are free from federal income taxes. Under the Higher Education Affordability and Equity Act, the annual contribution limits to these accounts would increase from \$2,000 to \$5,000. According to the Princeton Review, the average cost of a year's tuition, room and board, and subsequent fees will increase by \$10,000 in the next 15 years. Savings accounts designed for saving money going to college education should be able to allow contributions that reflect the growing costs of higher education.

The Higher Education Affordability and Equity Act is a sensible alternative to the Affordability in Higher Education Act recently introduced into Congress. This bill, proposed by Rep. Howard McKeon, R-Calif., penalizes universities for tuition increases, when in reality most of the time universities are not to blame for these increases. The penalties for universities with tuition increases, if the rise is greater than two times the rate of inflation, is a loss of Title IV programs designed to provide



SETH FREEMAN • THE BATTALION

financial aid to students. McKeon's plan would, as means to protect students from tuition increase, cut financial aid to students.

The Higher Education Affordability and Equity Act would help relieve the growing financial burden of college placed on students and their families. Even more importantly, the act can, in some situations, decide whether a deserving student is able to attend college.

John David Blakley is a sophomore political science major.

#### MAIL CALL

#### Abortion ends an innocent life

In response to Jonathan Steed's Oct. 3 column:

Mr. Steed continually attempted to divert the reader's attention from the issue at hand. Regardless of the rhetoric infused on both sides, the central subject of debate does not change. The issue: abortion. The fact: an innocent life is ended.

Steed falsely claimed that the term "partial-birth abortion" is a product of "anti-choice propaganda." However, if you go to the IntelHealth Web site, and look up the term partial-birth abortion in the medical dictionary search tools, it is defined as, "an abortion in the second or third trimester of pregnancy in which the death of the fetus is induced after it has passed partway through the birth canal."

What then, Mr. Steed, should this gruesome procedure be called? The child is delivered, the abortionist punctures the back of the skull, a tube is inserted, and the child's brains are sucked out. Once the body goes limp, the child is fully delivered. In truth, this barbaric procedure should not be named "partial-birth abortion." It should be called infanticide.

Amber Matchen  
Class of 2000

#### Crimes will always occur, not an excuse

Although I do not doubt that Mr. Steed did research in this subject before he wrote the article, I find some discrepancies in his report and the actual bill itself. Where Mr. Steed explains that partial-birth abortions would make the right of the mother to terminate her pregnancy on grounds of her own physical well-being illegal, is completely false.

One must understand, as well, that partial-birth abortions happen so late in the pregnancy that the baby would be able to live if given the chance with the medical technology here in the United States. Also, I am absolutely disgusted in the quote that was extracted in such a larger context, "Whether illegal or not, abortions will always happen," is even a viable excuse to keeping abortions legal. He is exactly right in the quote but that's like saying, "Whether illegal or not, rape will

always happen," or "Whether illegal or not, murder will always happen," because those crimes still happen too. But, should we allow rape and murder to be legal for the rights of those who commit those acts? The fact of the matter is whether illegal or not anything will happen, but it doesn't make it acceptable.

Kerri Vance  
Class of 2006

#### The unborn deserve same rights as living

It is obvious to me that Mr. Steed, like a growing number of Americans today, has swallowed the idea that a human is not a human until it is born. I think this is the real tragedy in our culture today. It is a shame that we live in a country today that will hail a piece of rock with petrified bacteria from Mars as life, yet not give that same term of dignity to a child in the womb. It is a shame that we live in a town today that will give a funeral with full military honors to a dead dog but not to the children who are aborted every month right down the road. It's because we have become a nation of selfish individuals. 95 percent of the abortions performed in the United States are done as a means of birth control, not for any sort of medical reasons. We are so overwhelmingly concerned with ourselves and our ambitions that we refuse to slow our lives down. We want the joy of sex without the natural responsibility that comes with it.

We whine and cry and protest when someone actually stands up for what is right.

Jason Ferguson  
Class of 2005

#### Choice exists before third trimester

Partial birth abortions are banned once a woman enters the third trimester, and the only time they can receive an abortion is when her health is in jeopardy. To quote from the bill itself, "Partial Birth Ban Act 2003, Amends the Federal criminal code to prohibit any physician or other individual from knowingly performing a partial-birth abortion, except when necessary to save the life of a mother that is endangered by a physical disorder, illness or injury."

This is no serious assault on a woman's right to choose, all it does

is put a time table on it. If you want an abortion, do it before the third trimester. It's that simple. The Partial birth abortion procedure isn't mentioned in medical textbooks, because they don't teach the procedure — requiring piercing the fetus' brain and sucking it out with a vacuum — in medical school.

Nicholas Davis  
Class 2004

#### Activists skew the public's perceptions

Mr. Steed defends a woman's right "to choose when and where to start a family." For that I must thank him; it is a very important right to defend.

Unfortunately, like many other abortion proponents, Mr. Steed uses this precious right as a guise to protect abortion. However, banning abortion helps women, and does not deny them reproductive rights.

Abortion is not a valid option. It kills an innocent child. Conception creates new human life, and abortion murders that life. Abortion also hurts the women and men involved.

Many promote abortion in the case of rape or incest, desiring to help the victims of these horrible crimes; however, they are unwittingly adding to the suffering of these already devastated women. Studies show that keeping the baby often helps a woman overcome the pain inflicted upon her, while abortion actually increases the woman's mental anguish.

The truth is that women's rights are only really defended when abortion is no longer thrust upon them as a viable option, with the tragic truth hidden from them by avid abortion activists.

David Dunton  
President Aggies for Life  
Class of 2005

#### Low attendance ruins Aggie spirit

Texas A&M is a special place; a University full of tradition and a spirit that no one else can understand. I take a tremendous amount of pride in participating in traditions that thousands of Aggies before me have done. I think about E. King Gil when I stand the entire football game as a member of the Twelfth Man. After seeing pictures of the student side from this weekend, I discovered that some of my fellow students decided

they didn't need to join the Twelfth Man this game. It was one of the most disgusting things I have ever seen: two ends of the third deck completely empty. Is the Spirit of Aggieland dying? After what I have seen this past weekend it is obvious to me that it is. To those of you who weren't at the game: Where were you? We need you, our football team needs you, your Aggie family needs you. Don't let the Spirit die; be a Fightin' Texas Aggie.

Tony Carver  
Class of 2004

#### Football team staying protects tradition

In response to an Oct. 31 mail call:

Football players staying is a tradition, and should not be thrown to the curb like all the other wonderful traditions such as Bonfire, mums at each game for your date. Each game is a homecoming, but unfortunately many of you youngsters didn't know this. To make the statement that the football players are more Aggie than many of the students is also an insult to the student body. Most of the players probably don't really care about the wonderful traditions that my University holds so dear.

Remember young man, the football team is part of the student body, so it is their responsibility to participate in the yell practice also. One other thing Army, it is a junior and senior privilege to whoop. What has happened to the class distinction regarding wildcatting? It's not just a Corps thing.

Hood Mauermann  
Class of 1985

#### Playing the game serves as no excuse

It is not ridiculous for any member of the Twelfth Man to expect the team to attend the singing of the War Hymn after the football game, win or lose. Why if we are asked to be "the Twelfth Man on the team," can we not expect them to at least partially participate in the Aggie War Hymn immediately after the game? The team did for the game against Kansas, which I thank them for.

We do not discount their hard work on and off the field when asking them to stay for the War Hymn, but to start judging how much "more" they are an Aggie because they play sports is just plain wrong. We, in the stands, are just as much of an Aggie as the ones on the field, and asking the team to stay to sing a song in unity with the student body, "the Twelfth Man on the team," is not asking much.

After all, aren't we all Aggies, one in the same?

John Book  
Class of 2007

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@thebattalion.net

