OPINION THE BATTALION

Page 5B • Thursday, February 19, 2004

Workin' on the railroad Proposed plan for railroad tracks will benefit citizens and students of B-CS

items" (as stated The history of College duties on the Station and Texas A&M ite) in the form of has always had close ties the Diamond the railroad. In its early days, f I'm wrong, but terailroad was a means for mission of the promote Aggie sudents to get to the versity, and the town grew h the world were s with pictures of and the University and its hoad station. But times have

mged, and now the train's re the baseball in the Bryan-College but it was barely t looking for it! four hours from

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the weekend, a d, the Diamond d at the gates t

is the Aggies

ony Woolstrum n, an Aggie mom,

end to create an environmental assessment, ording to an article from The Bryan-College beared on Texas ation Eagle. It seems the plans of the MPO and legislators list for Taxs Transportation Department will greatly te budget with no norove the rail situation in the area. muth saved the Each plan has with varying impact on the A&M anyus, but plan 12-2 is clearly the best option. > state legislatur of a \$9.9 billion The first plan, called Alignment 1, leaves my as they are, with no changes to the rail line

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uving back across the river to meet existing is north of Bryan. Logan Renfro

But these plans have been set aside for now. Class of 200

Alignment 1 made no improvement to the current situation. Alignment 6-1 was opposed by the City of Bryan because it could damage the quality of life along Highway 47. The 10-2 plan was problematic because it crossed the flood plain of the Brazos River, requiring long bridges to meet requirements of federal law, according to Carter & Burgess.

Alignment 12-2 involves tracks looping to the west of Bryan and FM 2818 and rejoining existing lines to the north of town. This plan would take the tracks out of downtown Bryan, but would leave them where they are in College Station. But the plan did not leave College Station residents and A&M students high and dry. As part of the plan, underpasses such as the one at University Drive would be built at 16 locations, 11 of them at existing railroad crossings, including Holleman, Rock Prairie and Villa Maria.

This would greatly improve traffic patterns and decrease safety risks for A&M students as well as the community at large. Students would no longer have to wait on the bus at Old Main while a train crawls by at 25 mph. Trains would no longer cause traffic jams at George Bush and Wellborn. But one of the best features of the plan is that Old Main and Joe Routt would be given underpasses. Although the study has been a long time in coming, it seems that the results will be finally worth it.

This may mean construction headaches such as the one that occurred during the construction of the Pedestrian Passageway at Joe Routt, but it will be well worth it in the long run for the University and the area. The University, its partners in the MPO and transportation department have done well for the students and the citizens in the area with this plan.

With the anticipated arrival of the finished study from the MPO's consultants, hopefully the plans will move into the final design stages so work can begin soon. The Bryan-College Station area has suffered too long from rail related congestion and safety issues.

> David Shoemaker is a junior management major.



Gaining suffrage... again



DAVID SHOEMAKER

wion area has changed. Trains have become an myance, preventing students from reaching son time and disrupting rush-hour traffic. ire proposed plan - 12-2, or the Bryan north mass plan - would benefit the residents of han and College Station more so than one of other three

The University, Texas Department of sportation, Union Pacific, Brazos County and Class of 2002 edites of Bryan and College Station formed a force to address the problem. The Bryanlege Station Metropolitan Planning

mization (MPO) hired Carter & Burgess sultants to study making changes to the rail-

a's right-of-way to improve congestion issues.

After several years of deliberations and many

ferent proposed plans, the MPO has finally set-

tion has been delayed until March due to the

don a plan from four finalists. The final pres-

trough town or to the highways that cross it.

Augment 6-1 took the tracks to the west of

m.past Easterwood Airport and along State

47 to the north of Bryan. Alignment 10-

man more drastic, moving tracks across the

Burs River into Burleson County, and eventual-

Attack on Prairie View A&M students uses voting as an excuse to promote racism

racially-prejudiced official accomplished precisely the thing he sought to prevent when he incited political divism among students at Prairie View A&M y trying to suppress their right to vote. In a letter run in The Waller Times, Waller ounty District Attorney Oliver Kitzman realened to prosecute the University if it

lowed students who were not permanent resients of the county to vote in local elections. Kitzman contends that since students comprise

arge percentage of the voting population, their votes are able to we election results at the expense of permanent residents. Students living in a community have every right to take an ative role in their community by choosing to vote, as signifidecisions and issues have no less impact on their lives than any other resident. Furthermore, it seems that a district normey should be able to recognize the value of college stuents as educated voters.

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott re-affirmed the stuand' right to vote as "a fundamental right in this state and in s country. College students cannot be targeted for discrimiabry residency requirements, and nothing prevents them from wing where they attend school." The only catch is that stuans must claim Waller County as their residence, just as stas A&M students who wish to vote locally must designate ollege Station,

However, as Prairie View student Ashley McDonald told The sAngeles Times, "Students at other Texas colleges aren't ever estioned on whether they're qualified to register, but they are Prairie View. It's just not right."

Clearly residency is not the real issue.

LINDSAY ORMAN

whites are over-represented, and

blacks are under-represented. It is

worthwhile to debate whether demo-

graphics should be matched, what

diversity means and its merit as a

goal. Name-calling is not a worth-

The Young Conservatives' mail call

purported to be about the FCIC. Its

hidden agenda was to promote YCT

and its scholarship. I applaud the

race-neutral economic encourage-

ment of a scholarship, but I strongly

disapprove of the tactics and intellec-

Colin Gibson

Class of 2002

tual dishonesty of the mail call.

while, intellectually honest debate.

The truth of the matter is that Kitzman is threatening students' voting rights on a racial basis disguised as geography issue. Coincidentally, Prairie View is a historically black univer-

sity in a town that is 58 percent white and only 29 percent black. The implication of Kitzman's argument is clear: He fears black students will dilute or even overrule the white vote.

Kitzman has a history of trying to advance his personal agenda of racism and discrimination through political action in a predominatelywhite county notorious for confederate activity and intolerance, according to University Wire. In the 1970s, when Kitzman previously served as district attorney, the Waller County voter registrar mandated a residency questionnaire for students, but not for non-students. A federal lawsuit followed, as well as a federal court order in 1978 banning the registrar from differ-

entiating students from non-students in voting requirements.

Though students' rights may have been upheld in several rulings, Kitzman continues to exert an intimidating presence which necessitates active resistance.

With the support of the NAACP, four students have filed a lawsuit out of fear of prosecution, regardless of what the attorney general has ruled if they register to vote. No person should be subjected to this fear; it is contrary to everything that American ideals of democracy proclaim.

'It's a situation very reminiscent of the 1960s that unfortunately we're having to deal with in 2004," Executive Director of the Houston chapter of the NAACP Yolanda Smith told The Los Angeles Times.

Prairie View students have made it clear that they are willing

MAIL CALL

Everyone has a right to protest his beliefs

In response to a Feb. 18 mail call:

The first widely held view of Texas A&M is the primary picture of A&M students outside of The University. The second picture that Joseph Abel refers to is a mostly untrue view of Aggies. We are labeled as intolerant and "sick" because of the rash actions of a few.

I do not accept homosexuality as a genetic hindrance. I accept the fact that people have alternative lifestyles. and that there is nothing I can do about what people do privately. However, it is my opinion to hold on whether I agree with homosexual conduct . Such rallies as straight pride are the celebration of a portion of the population upholding

their beliefs of heterosexuality. For you to decide that you can agree with one side of an issue but not let the other voice its opinion is intolerant

to vote.

6 6 The truth of the

threatening students'

voting right on a racial

basis disguised as a

geography issue.

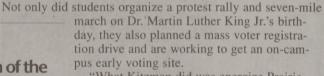
Again, it is regrettable that a few individuals felt it was necessary to attack someone for his sexual-orientation.

But to label Aggies as universally intolerant and in need of a "cure for their sickness" says a lot for your tolerance.

> Michael Gorney Class of 2003

Lindsay Orman is a senior

English major.



to fight courageously for their constitutionally-guaranteed right

"What Kitzman did was energize Prairie matter is that Kitzman is View students," said Prairie View Student Body President Hendrik Maison. "People are more interested than they have been in a long time. I can honestly say that students are really looking forward to voting."

> Kitzman has brought his continued lack of integrity and his disregard for democracy to national attention, and now it is the job of the nation to hold him accountable.

As fellow Aggies in the A&M system, as Texans who wish to fight stereotypes of igno-

rance and racial prejudice and as Americans committed to the ideas of justice and democracy, A&M students must not remain silent on such an important issue not only of students' rights, but also of civil rights.

In any event, the plight of the Prairie View students should remind all students that the right and responsibility to vote should be exercised conscientiously and thoughtfully and not be taken for granted.

INVADED IRAQ WAR ATIONALE TO PREVENT GAY MARRIAGE

ICT is avoiding facts on students' race

Ing Conservatives of Texas have orted to shrill name-calling in mplain the Democrats are doing to esident George W. Bush?

The fact of the matter is undergraddemographics starkly contrast use of Texas and the United States a whole. Based on the Fall 2003 ollment profile, Texas A&M had Approved White, 2.4 percent Black, 13.1 percent Asian undergradu-As According to the 2000 Census, and the United States have

71.2 percent and 75.1 percent whites, 11.5 percent and 12.3 percent blacks, and 3.6 percent and 3.6 percent Asians respectively. Proportionately,

nresponse to a Feb. 17 mail call:

Why does it surprise me that the Theat from an actual debate of the sues? Isn't this what conservatives