

## Republicans getting dirty

*Bush is guilty of many of the charges he's accusing Kerry of in re-election bid*

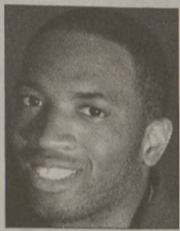
Spring started only a few days ago, but it might as well be autumn with the way the race for the presidency has been progressing. Both President George W. Bush and Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., have already brought out negative ads attacking each other.

However, some of the arguments used against Kerry by conservatives and Republicans are ineffective because the arguments used against Kerry can be turned around to criticize Bush. For example, an advertisement by the conservative group Citizens United is a satire of the MasterCard "Priceless" commercials. In the ad, Kerry is criticized for receiving \$75 haircuts, wearing \$250 shirts and owning yachts and mansions. The commercial ends with the statement, "Another rich, elitist liberal from Massachusetts who claims he is a man of the people... priceless."

What is truly "priceless" is an advertisement that makes no attempt to criticize Kerry's record. Instead, it argues Kerry shouldn't be voted for because he has more material wealth than the average American. Liberals are constantly accused of engaging class warfare, yet conservatives are perfectly willing to attack the rich also.

The advertisement also neglects to mention that Bush, who was born in New Haven, Conn., has also known privilege his entire life or that he and Kerry both graduated from Yale University.

Another attempt to attack Kerry came when Kerry unknowingly made a remark into a live microphone concerning his Republican attackers, saying, "These guys are the most crooked, you know, lying group I have ever seen." Some said this type of comment was unbecoming of a presidential candidate. But in his 2000 campaign, Bush also experienced an open-mike gaffe. He remarked to then-Vice Presidential candidate Dick Cheney and the entire world, "There's



COLLINS EZEANYIM

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Adam Clymer, major league asshole from The New York Times.” Kerry was criticized for not apologizing for his remarks, but Bush never apologized for his remarks either. He only said he regretted they were heard, according to the BBC.

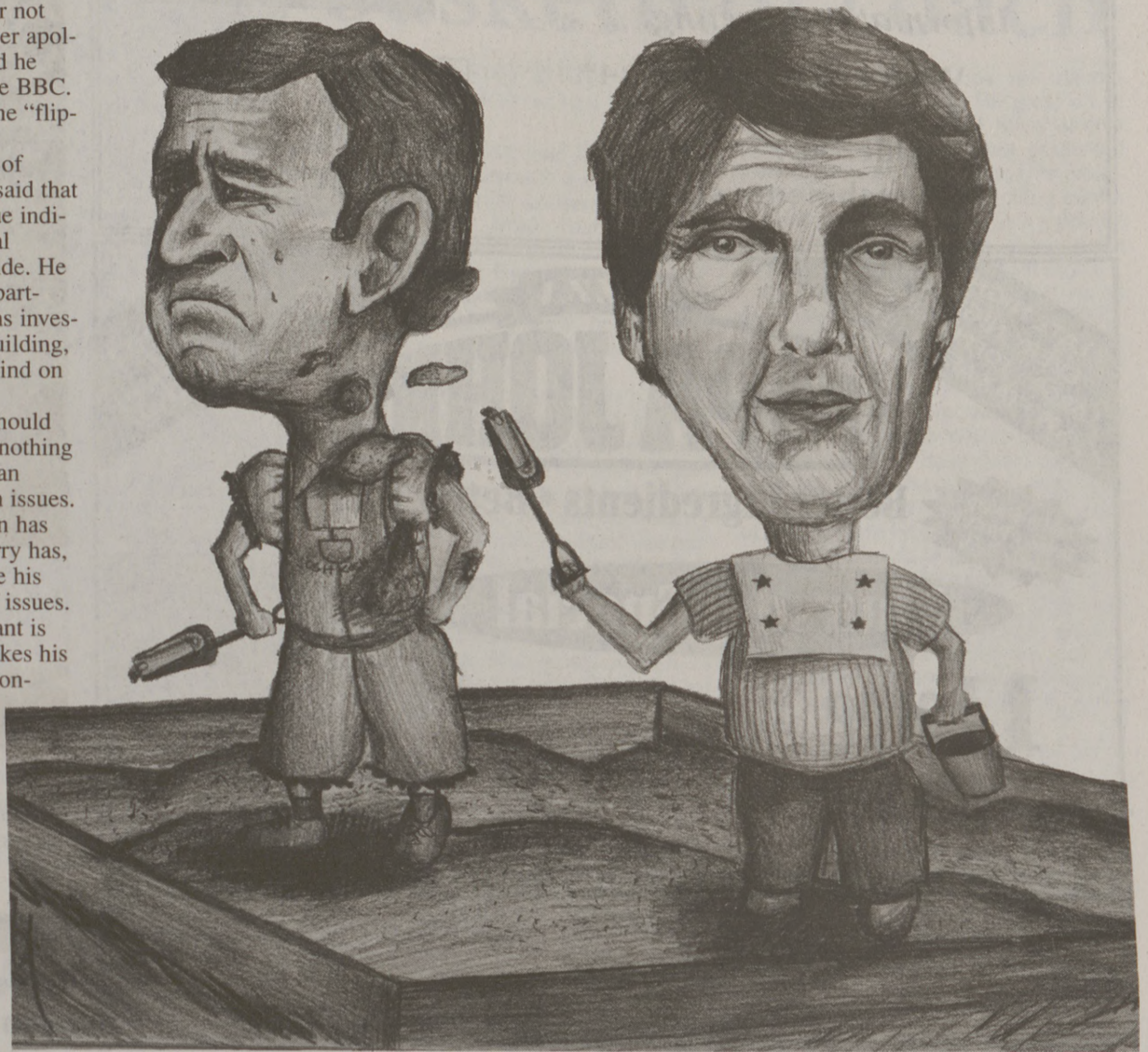
The most used attack on Kerry is that he “flip-flops” on issues. But political Web site DailyKos.com has compiled a sizable list of Bush flip-flops. For example, Bush once said that states should decide the gay marriage issue individually, but now he wants a constitutional amendment banning the practice nationwide. He was also against a Homeland Security department, a 9-11 commission, an Iraq weapons investigation and nation building, but he changed his mind on all these issues.

Bush supporters should be reminded there is nothing wrong with a politician changing his mind on issues. And when a politician has served as long as Kerry has, he is bound to change his mind on a number of issues. What is most important is that the politician makes his stance based on his conscience and not poll numbers, pundits or other political forces.

So how should Democrats respond to these charges against Kerry? New York senior senator Charles Schumer told The Daily Show’s Jon Stewart the Democrats did not have an attack machine. This is false, but the Democrats can afford to be more subtle than the Republicans. They can simply highlight criticisms of Bush made by influential non-politicians.

Howard Stern is an example. He has become extremely critical of Bush and is urging his listeners to not vote the president for reelection. This spells trouble for the Bush administration considering Stern has a loyal audience of about eight million, according to an MTV News report. Most of the audience is white males, which is a solid Republican block, but poll numbers indicate a growing number may be receptive to voting for Kerry.

The Democratic machine can also use the



comments of actor and director Mel Gibson. In an interview with conservative radio and television personality, Sean Hannity, Gibson said of Bush, “I am having my doubts, of late. It mainly has to do with the weapons (of mass destruction) we can’t seem to find (in Iraq).”

Gibson has become influential with a key part of Bush’s base, conservative evangelical Christians, due to his movie “The Passion of The Christ.” His comments regarding Iraq show that Americans of all political stripes are dissatisfied with Bush’s war policies.

Ultimately, Republicans will have to resort to using skewed and unreasonable attacks on Kerry because they can’t run on Bush’s record which is marked by more domestic and foreign failures than successes.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major. Graphic by Rylie Deyoe

### MAIL CALL

#### MSC president must never be an elected position

Thank you Student Senate. Thank you for seizing control of an issue you never had jurisdiction over to begin with.

You have no right to demand the election of the MSC president. You do not understand the operation and management of the MSC, nor did you consult any of the committees on how they felt before you moved forward with this ridiculous referendum.

Thanks for once again accurately representing how we (the students) feel about things. How can the Student Senate justify its argument that the MSC President should be elected, when in reality, student elections are name-recognition contests?

Approximately 1800 students (4.1 percent of the student body) represent the MSC and its committees. By your argument that the amount of input students should have in the MSC will increase by electing the MSC president, you shouldn’t be so inconsiderate as to forget the Corps of Cadets. Maybe by electing the Corps Commander, we can increase the amount of input we have in the Corps’ operation. This idea is as absurd as your argument.

The goal of this referendum is to increase the amount of input students can have in MSC matters. I agree; student input is required for effective operation and management of any student organization.

Students not involved in the MSC or Student Senate take note: By electing the MSC president, you will severely affect what you can benefit from in the MSC. The application and interview process for MSC president is extremely thorough and effective. It has worked for 53 years, and the MSC has grown by leaps and bounds.

Please trust that the 1,800 students plus the experienced advisers can select the candidate that best meets their needs of the MSC, its committees and Texas A&M.

Perhaps we should evaluate how the Student Senate operates, and vote to elect the speaker of the senate. I wonder if they would feel insulted as well, especially since so many of us don’t understand what they really do.

Elizabeth Proffitt  
Class of 2004

#### Forum at Bush Library was not all that was promised

When I first found out that George Bush would be presenting a forum hosting several of Houston’s renowned sports legends, I knew I had to get tickets. I arrived at the George Bush Presidential Library 45 minutes before the forum was to begin and reached the location only to find a projection screen staring back at me.

I was very disappointed when I realized I would be seeing the candidates as if they were on television when the whole point of going was to see the men in person. While Bush and the panel did stop in the room for approximately a minute and a half, it was not what I was expecting from what I read in the e-mail that was sent out.

Halfway through the question-and-answer session, a man came in to tell us we could go into the forum to ask a question only to snap at everyone when a large number of people stood up. Not only could we not see the forum in person, but we were also limited in our ability to interact with the panelists, which was the point of the forum. I write because I was disappointed and I feel I was misled, and others around me made it clear they felt the same way. Don’t get me wrong, I enjoyed the forum and it was very informative, however, I do feel my points are valid.

The e-mail that was sent out by the Bush Presidential Library Foundation should have made it clear that the students would not be seeing the live forum before 250 of us sat in line for tickets and arrived early because we were led to believe we would be sitting in a live forum that we would easily be able to participate in. If not, the foundation should have made it possible for all students to attend the forum and not just student athletes and members of the Corps. Either the forum should have been held at a larger facility or they should have sold fewer students tickets to see the forum or perhaps not given members of the Corps or student athletes special seating, because by doing so, they made the statement that regular students do not deserve the same treatment as members of the above student groups.

Ashley Roberson  
Class of 2007

## Fee increase of little advantage to students

As student body elections draw near, students must be aware that an item with more impact than the selection of yell leaders will be on the ballot. The Student Services Fee is slated to increase by 65 cents per credit hour, making the total students pay per credit hour \$12.51 or \$150.12 for a student enrolled in 12 or more credit hours. This brings the price per credit hour to a penny above the current cap, requiring a referendum vote by state law. While the 65 cents extra is less than the cost of a soda, closer examination of what the increase will fund reveals a number of concerns.

In an attempt to address student questions, the office of the vice president of student affairs instigated a task force aimed at “educating students on what the fee increase is for without a hidden agenda,” said Tom Reber, interim assistant vice president for student affairs.

The education process takes the form of quarter-page Battalion ads, telling you that “Student Services are working for you,” highlighting the 18 different departments funded by student fees.

However, what the ads and the task force have failed to do is accurately inform students on what exactly the fee increase will fund. The advertisements display departments and services sponsored by Student Fees that will retain funding regardless of whether the increase passes or fails. Once a department receives funding, that money is in its hands even if it does not instigate the program it planned to. The driving force behind the fee referendum is the creation of new programs or the amplification of current ones, many of which are unnecessary.

Memorial Student Center programs currently receive \$2,326,513 from student services fees and have received recommendations from the Student Services Fee Board of \$178,812. An exorbitant \$90,000 of the increase, roughly \$2 per student, will go toward additional funding for MSC Aggie Nights, a program which does not come close to reaching a significant percentage of the student body. The Child Care Center would receive an additional \$35,000 under the recommendation, though students

only account for 42 percent of its clients.

Many of the new programs that received recommendations for funding by SSFAB are legitimate needs, such as pay raises that are state-mandated. However, the SSFAB does not examine the line-item budget of these programs. If it did, it would discover much of students’ money is not being dealt with frugally. The Department of Student

Life would receive \$73,900 under the proposed increase, but already spends more than \$100,000 on Gender Issues Education Services. The MSC President Office receives \$5,000 allocated toward “business meals,” and the MSC Student Programs Office spent nearly \$140,000 last year on food and drinks.

Should the fee referendum pass, the student services fee could increase by as much as 10 percent a year until the fee reaches \$250 per semester. Although Reber estimates that it would not reach this level until 2016, there are no guarantees.

In the past 10 years, fees have had an average growth of 4.4 percent per year, which when coupled with state-mandated raises, has left little funds to go toward future development. The purpose of the proposed increase, at 5.5 percent, goes beyond the current cap to foster “future growth,” said SSFAB Chair Jim Carlson. While program development is commendable, the perpetual waste of student money on sparsely used programs must be stopped.

Budget accountability must be demanded, and the excessive spending cannot be ignored.

Instead of giving these programs more money in economic hard times when tuition is threatening to climb once again, these programs need to find the money in other places and trim the fat in their own budgets. Approval of the fee referendum this year essentially writes Student Services a blank check for the future for programs that will likely be ignored by the majority of students.



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