



Tuesday, July 15, 2008

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The Little Bill That Could

by Cody Asher and Hannah Urbach

“Not supporting this bill is un-4-H” stated Lobbyist Rebecca Campbell at Monday’s Education public hearing. HB 109/SB 309 seems to be creating division among Lobbyists. On the other side of this issue, Lobbyist Christopher Dalton addressed the Representatives stating that he urged the members of the Education Committee to fail this bill. With the controversy arising between opposing sides, the Chairman of the Education Committee, Dianna Fisher, has spoken saying “We don’t want this bill to overshadow the other equally important bills.” House Bill 109 is the “Home School UIL Participation” act. To put it simply, it states that: Texas public schools must allow homeschooled students to participate in all sports and extracurricular activities. The author of this questionable bill, Jordan Greene, of District 4, said he feels that “This bill will provide an equal opportunity for homeschoolers and private schooled youth alike.” He went on to say that he felt that this was “what America was built on.” As Representative Greene rose to present HB 109, one could feel the atmosphere of the committee members’ conversation change from the light-hearted to a more serious air. An unidentified representative posed the question, “while UIL participation is a homeschoolers right; will it only lead to more regulations from the government for homeschoolers?” The debate continued in what seemed to be a back and forth battle between homeschool versus public school students, forcing Chairman Fisher to end debate and call for a vote. After much turmoil, HB 109 was defeated in committee. After various members of the committee presented their own bills, Representative Marcus Cook of District 6 moved that HB 109 be reconsidered stating that he “wanted to bring forth this subject to the entire house because it could be a good experience and bring up interesting debate.” Once again debate was heated amongst committee members over this seemingly innocent bill, with both sides passionately arguing many different opinions. Ultimately, HB 109 gained enough momentum and support to make it out of committee. While some of the representatives and lobbyists were ecstatic about this turn of events, “we’re really glad that HB 109



HB 109 author, Jordan Greene

was reconsidered and that we have a second chance to push for it...” (Lobbyists Rebekah Richter and Rebecca Campbell), others made it clear that they were not happy with this outcome. “We’re not against homeschoolers, just the faultiness of the bill”, stated Molly Dudensing, Lobbyist Coordinator. Governor Woolley claimed that “if HB 109 passes in both the Senate and the House tomorrow, I will remain unbiased and open to it.”

Making a Difference

by Chandra Dean

While delegates fervently debated bills in committee meetings on Monday afternoon, a small yet significant act of kindness was being done for the less fortunate citizens of Austin. When it was discovered that several sack lunches were left uneaten after yesterday’s lunch, our very own Governor Woolley and Page Ingram took it upon themselves to distribute



the excess food to a group of very grateful Austinites inhabiting Waller Creek Park adjacent to the Congress Hotel on 11th Street. Governor Woolley commented about the act saying, “It was a very humbling experience. It was rewarding to be able to, on behalf of Texas 4-H, reach out to those who aren’t as fortunate as we.” Page Ingram added, “Our contribution was small and took just a short time to perform, yet the experience was unforgettable.” Selfless acts such as these are just minor examples of what we, as 4-Hers, represent; making a difference one small act of kindness at a time.

Out of the Horse’s Mouth

by Rebecca Page

Senators Michael Schwind, Dustin Romike, Elizabeth Hill, and Courtney Hiser of the Environmental Committee passed Bill 152/352, Horse Processing Legalization. This bill states that 90% of horse meat harvested in the United States was sent to foreign countries for human consumption. Horses are now being slaughtered inhumanly in Mexico. This bill proposed to reopen processing plants in the United States to ensure the safety and humane treatment of horses. It is important to be able to give people the option to dispose of horses properly. The police and humane society confiscates horses from malnourishment and mistreatment, and the management of the horses gets very difficult and costly. Bill 152/352 helps get rid of unhealthy and unwanted horses. By reopening the processing plants, it would allow for the sale of meat to foreign countries and make a profit for Texas. Senator Romike expressed his opinion, “It is important to bring back interest to the raising and the production of the horse industry.” Governor Woolley encouraged the passing of this bill. “There was \$2.2 million needed to dispose of horses just in 2008,” the Governor stated in her speech this morning. This money can be put to better use instead of draining our state resources for needless causes. Bill 152/352 was passed unanimously on the Senate Floor and passed 138 to 38 in the House of Representatives.

A Right, or a Wrong

by Tanessa Cowan

In opposition to H.B 179/S.B 379, lowering the legal drinking age to 18, Governor Loni Woolley stated, "My decision will be made on facts, not fiction." Going on to say, "It is medically proven that at 18 the frontal lobes are not fully developed and will be damaged."

As the American Medical Association says, "frontal lobe development and the refinement of pathways and connections continue until 16, and a high of energy is used as the brain matures until age 20. Damage from alcohol at this time can be long-term and irreversible. In addition, short term or moderate drinking impairs learning and memory far more in youth than adults. Adolescents need only drink half as much to suffer the same negative effects."

The other side of the topic, Representative Ellis Meyer brought up the issue of, "If we are old enough to fight and die for our country, vote, and buy tobacco at 18, why can't we buy a beer?" Representative Meyer also points out that, "Those that want to party probably will, anyway. Your legal guardian can buy a beer and set it in front of you." Shelbi Knisley also reiterated this while introducing her bill, saying, "They will drink anyway."

So why not make it legal? One point brought up against this bill when Representative Knisley said, "There are kids that are 9 already drinking." Is if we lower the drinking age to 18, "Won't that cause more young kids to think it's okay? So younger and younger kids start drinking?" One representative asked in argument.

Krysta Peterson, whose father is a fire fighter, is called to a lot of accidents because of drunk drivers, and feels that if we lower the age to 18, they will only increase.

Representative Meyer said, "It's a choice. When you are 18 you are legally on your own. So you should be able to make the decision."

"But it kills your brain cells, which is irreversible." Representative Alexis Cowan pointed out.

Should it be your choice to be able to legally get drunk at 18? Or wait to have the privilege until you are 21? At a 10/12 defeat in the Government, Finance and Probation Committee, the House of Representatives says wait.

Alcohol Facts:

- 76 million people worldwide have alcohol use disorder.
- Can cause alcohol poisoning in binge drinking, common among teens under 18, and can cause a coma or death.
- On the positive side, alcohol can reduce your risk of heart disease, lower your risk of gallstones, and reduce your risk of heart attack.
- Diseases attributed wholly to alcohol consumption: alcohol dependence syndrome, alcoholic polyneuropathy, (affects nerves) alcoholic cardiomyopathy, (heart) alcoholic gastritis, and (stomach) alcoholic liver cirrhosis.
- Alcohol affects your central nervous system as a depressant.
- Increases the amount of lip, throat, tongue, esophagus and liver cancer with the amount of alcohol you consume.
- Resources: greenfacts.com, mayoclinic.com, www.cdc.gov/alcohol/faqs.htm, www.ama-assn.org

Hawaii... Texas 4-H Style

by Erin Reid



The "Hawaii... Texas 4-H Style" theme dinner was graced by grass skirts and tons of leis. Delegates enjoyed watching traditional Hula dancing taught by Austin Hula Dance Company. The Company shared different dances and different instruments related to Hula dancing. The more daring delegates had the opportunity to learn the dance. There was also a costume contest. Michael Edwards

and his parrot, Charles, beat their competitors and won the contest. After a delicious Hawaiian-inspired dinner, the House of Representatives took on the Senate, Press Corps and Lobbyists in a game of passing the hula hoops from person to person. The Senate, Press and Lobbyist team beat the House by far! Way to go!!!

Meet Our Special Guests

by Whitney

Taylor

Yesterday we were fortunate enough to have with us Mr. and Mrs. Robert Silverthorn. They are long time supporters of 4-H and many other youth and community service organizations.



Mr. & Mrs. Silverthorn and Mr. & Mrs. Colvin enjoy the Luau

They were accompanied by their charming friends: Mr. and Mrs. Dale Colvin. Mr. and Mrs. Silverthorn have supported Texas State Congress for the last four years and say their favorite part of congress is "...seeing people we've known for awhile and meeting new people with such common attributes...". After being asked his thoughts on the participation of 4-Hers during the House Session, Mr. Silverthorn replied, "They were a conservative legislative body. They held themselves and the people accountable...the future of America is good." Although Mr. Silverthorn was not a 4-Her as a kid, he was very active in other various activities including Boy Scouts. Due to his father being in the Marine Core, he has lived in a variety of places from Rhode Island to Hawaii and several in between. Be sure to show your gratitude towards him and his wife. Without their continued support, Texas State Congress would not be what it is today: a life changing experience. Remember these words of wisdom from Mr. Silverthorn as we go through these last days of Congress, "...carry on and never, never, never give up."

The Governor Claims Her Throne

by Brody Smith



As the Senate and House Committees ended their preliminary bill decisions and returned to the chambers for the opening debates, Governor Woolley got an opportunity of a lifetime. In the symbolic fashion of the Governor's Office, the 4-H Governor was allowed to sit behind

the desk that Texas Governor Rick Perry uses to sign bills into law. Along with Page Andrew Ingram, Governor Woolley was introduced to State Representative Charles "Doc" Anderson and his District Director, Kirk Krakowian. These two gentlemen are strong advocates of our organization, which reflects their strong character in bettering the state of Texas. Governor Woolley will hopefully be able to sign bills into law tomorrow morning, and we hope that there will be a great number of laws to review tomorrow evening.

Caught in the Crossfire

by Leslie Montalvo and Brody Smith

During the Senate and House committee meetings, several issues arose that brought about some finger pointing and hair rising debates. Chief among them was Senate Bill 421 and House Bill 221 "Lowering Legal Age to Purchase Fire Arms". In the House committee yesterday, Representative Douglas from Live Oak County voiced his opinion on lowering the legal age of 21 to 18, in order to buy fire arms. "Why is it expectable for an 18 year old to fight for their country at war and take another man's life? Although It's not ok for them to buy a gun to protect himself." It seemed he had most agreeing with his view point, until a young lady from Fayette County questioned the safety of some teenagers with issues carrying around guns. Other debate that followed filled the room promptly and furiously; "what about the V. Tech shooting, do we want more stories such as this?" and "Why would you need a gun if you're 18 and live with your parents, whom will more than likely have a gun in your house?" Now, many of you will have your different opinion's, some said, we live in Texas, but I ask you, is that enough? Some protested with "The V.J. Tech shooting could have been prevented if a few college student's had a gun for self defense", "if your home alone you would have a gun in case of an emergency", and "if you were under 21 in college on a shooting sport team, need to buy a fire arm for an event and your parents live far away, this would be inconvenient". After a long heated debate going back and forth, the house committee took a vote and it passed, 12 in favor, 5 against.



I'd Lobby for That

by Leslie Montalvo, Cody Asher, Hannah Urbach, Jessica Epps, and Amelia Tanner

Lobbyist Christopher Dalton was removed from the House floor on Monday afternoon for his zealous behavior over HB 152 (The Horse Processing Legalization Act), which passed by an outstanding vote of 138 to 38 and has not yet been presented in the Senate. This seems to be a similar pattern among other Lobbyists as Speaker of the House, Logan Moore, had to continuously reprimand them, going as far as to threaten to clear the gallery. After the House and Senate recess was called, the lobbyists held an invitation only reception at the Capitol View Terrace on the third floor of the Sheraton Austin Hotel. All around the room one could hear talk of HB 209/SB 409, (The Gasoline Tax in Agricultural Use Act) as both Representatives of the House and the Senate shared their viewpoint and stance on this particular bill. The lobbyists very strongly supported this HB. However, there were many mixed feelings considering HB 109/ SB 309 (The Homeschool UIL Bill). Molly Dudensing, the lobbyists coordinator, took a stand against this bill and urged others to do the same. Lobbyists Rebecca Campbell and Rebekah Richter passionately supported this bill. Even the homeschoolers at 4-H Congress have different opinions. Homeschooler Michael Schwind states that while public schools let homeschoolers take core classes at the schools, they will not allow them to play sports. He questions, "Why is this any different?" In opposition, homeschooler Jackie Gorhum said, "I feel that homeschoolers are not under the same UIL regulations... homeschoolers have unfair advantages." A heated debate is expected to be in tomorrow's forecast.

The Border Draws Battle Lines

by Brody Smith

The Senate erupted in a heated debate over the Senate Bill 391, the Increase Border Security Act. With the diverse background of regional lifestyles and cultures, it was only natural that several Senators would feel more strongly about approving this act than others. The struggle for approval was led by Senator Troy Tarpley of District 6. With illegal immigrants and the drug wars of Mexico only a glance away across the Rio Grande River, tighter security and increased border patrols are a must. However, the opposition to this bill was led by Senator Katherine Albus from District 2. Speculation over where the 200 million dollars in funds would be used and undecided methods on how to stop the illegal immigrants and drug trafficking were key in Senator Albus's argument. "There would be too much money put into this act without a tested system to back it up. The bill was not specific enough to pass. If it were amended, I might reconsider. I am not about to put a leap of faith into an unproven system which might not work," commented Senator Albus as she exited the Senate Chamber. Senator Tarpley countered with the fact that "the opposition did not know what the problem covers. Drug dealers and illegal aliens are a constant in District 6." With different sides of the opposition swaying the minds of the individual senators, the majority led by Albus, ended up silencing the bill with a 26 to 5 vote in favor of failing the bill. The border patrol and drug war have been constant threats to Texan security for decades. It seems only time will reveal a solution to this issue which will meet the expectations of all parties involved.

Time to Shine 209

by Dani Wilkins

House Bill 209, Senate Bill 409, also known as “Gasoline Tax in Agriculture Use” was a heated topic in the House of Representatives’ Highways and Transportation public hearing Monday afternoon. Lobbyists Cassidy Martin, Michael Edwards, Kayla Hahn, and Mr. Wrench pushed strongly for the bill to pass and gave brilliant reasons for it to do so. Representative Sara Breshears, House Sponsor and the author of the bill, was able to answer a few questions about her bill. She originally came up with the idea as her family’s cow/calf operation became more and more expensive and she was looking for a way to give farmers a break, as well as her own family. As Governor Woolley announced her support for this bill yesterday morning, Representative Breshears was surprised about how popular it had become. As for the success of the bill, Ms. Breshears isn’t so sure quite yet, but she is definitely excited about how it will do in this morning’s House of Representatives Session. As the public hearing ended, Representatives Ragland and Williams, Committee Chairman and Clerk, both said it was a great bill and they had a hard time seeing opposition. They both believed that it was time to shine Bill 209.

The Path Made Clear

Article by Brody Smith

Monday morning began with the walk to the State Capitol and the tour of the building. Afterwards, everyone crowded into the House floor and gallery and awaited the arrival of the governor. At 10:00 a.m., she made her entrance. Governor Woolley addressed both House and Senate as she made a gracious welcome to both houses and thanked the sponsors and advisors for putting Congress together for us. At the top of her agenda was the list of bills that she would support or discourage. This bit of information was a major item of interest for the Representatives, Senators, and Lobbyists alike. The Governor stated, “I based my decisions over the bills on facts, not fiction. I looked over the bills and rated them according to their organization, whether or not they were well researched, and defensible.” Education took on more prominent role in the bills that the Governor wanted to act on. She explained her reasoning and said that she was:

- For Bill 142/342 Excused Absences Act
- Against Bill 118/318 College Admission 10% Elimination Act
- Against Bill 109/309 High School UIL Participation Act
- For Bill 122/322 Better Public Schools in Texas Act
- For Bill 172/372 Voting Day Text Message Notification Act
- Against Bill 179/379 Minimum Drinking Age Act
- Against Bill 223/423 Choice at 17 Act
- For Bill 209/409 Gas Tax in Agricultural Use Act
- Against Bill 167/367 Terminate The Texas Termless Governor Rule Act
- For Bill 152/ 352 Horse Processing Legalization Act

These bills were the main concerns from the Governor and she asked the delegates to be fair and work for the betterment of Texas when debating these bills. After the Governor departed, we had an exclusive interview to contemplate her message from her speech at the Joint Session. She commented, “I was pleased at how everyone reacted to my speech by opening up their bill books and listening to my views. My personal favorite bill would be Bill 152/352, but I would like to see Bill 142/342 pass because it would be a benefit to us as 4-Hers and students the most.” The Governor also mentioned that she had not been approached by the Lobbyists since her speech and hoped that they would cooperate with her wishes on her bills. Only the debates will tell if her hopes bear fruit.

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Answers to Monday’s Trivia

submitted by Chandra Dean

1. How many floors are in the Texas State Capitol? Six
2. What is the official dance of Texas? Square Dance
3. What is the official fruit of Texas? Ruby Red Grapefruit
4. What is the official insect of Texas? Monarch Butterfly
5. How many original desks are on the floor of the Senate Chamber? 31
6. What is the largest room in the capitol? The House Chamber



photo courtesy of the 4-H Tech Team

Candid’s From Texas 4-H Congress

by Malory McKee & Gabriel Miller, Texas 4-H Congress Technology Operations

To see more pictures and information about Congress, the Texas 4-H Technology Team has created a few websites. These websites might even have your picture featured on them. Go check it out! A link to Photobucket, MySpace and YouTube will be on both websites.

These websites are:

- <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/events/txcongress/>
- www.myspace.com/tx4hcongress2008

See every editions of the Congressional Pillar, excited video feed, and photos from every event.

Congress Schedule

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast on your own
9:00 a.m.	House of Representatives Session
9:00 a.m.	Senate Session
11:30 a.m.	Lunch: House of Representatives
12:15 p.m.	Lunch: Senate
12:45 p.m.	Lunch: Lobbyist and Press Corp
12:15 p.m.	House of Representatives Session reconvenes
1:00 p.m.	Senate Session reconvenes
3:00 p.m.	Break
3:30 p.m.	Closing Joint Session of House and Senate
4:30-5:00 p.m.	Return back to Hotel
7:00 p.m.	Black and Green Centennial Gala
9:00 p.m.-12:00 a.m.	Congress Farewell Dance
12:00 a.m.	District Meetings
12:30 a.m.	In Rooms

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

6:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast on your own
6:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Depart for Home