



THE A&M POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE



MARCH 1986 STANDS AS A watershed date for Texas higher education funding, for it was then that the state, because of revenue shortfalls, cut higher education funding by 12 percent. Thereafter followed lean years for the state's economy and the resulting constraints in state funding for higher education in Texas. Some mistakenly believe that Texas A&M and the University of Texas did not really suffer significant shortfalls to their funding needs because they, along with Prairie View A&M, were the only universities entitled to share in the operational support funding (i.e., the Available University Fund) tied to the Permanent University Fund. While the AUF funding was and is helpful to those three universities, that line of reasoning was, and still is, uninformed because the funding needs of Texas A&M far exceeded the modest increases in revenue realized from the PUF. In fact, the share of funding from the state has decreased from over 50 percent to 27 percent while A&M students' and parents' share has more than doubled to 32 percent.

Supporting Legislators Who Support A&M

By Arno Krebs '64, trustee; Carri Baker Wells '84, trustee; Don Clark, PVAMU '67, trustee; Chuck Ellison '76, chair; and Mike White '75, secretary/treasurer



Texas A&M has been blessed through the years with former student-legislators — Senate Finance Chairman Steve Ogden '87, for example—who have worked very hard to ensure that their university's interests and welfare were considered when it came to appropriating state revenue for higher education. And of course Gov. Rick Perry '72 has led the way in support for A&M and higher education in general. However, Perry, Ogden and other legislators who have ties to A&M and other A&M System institutions cannot bear the whole load alone, and the day will come when they won't be there. These realities, and the knowledge of similar efforts in behalf of other higher education systems and institutions, led to the decision of several A&M leaders and friends last year to add another "arrow to our quiver," as it were.

The rest of this piece is about the origin, development and careful use of that other "arrow."

In order to cover the costs of running for office, Texas legislators must raise money to fund election and re-election campaigns, activities they do not relish, yet are necessary in a democracy. Individual Aggies, along with alumni of other System members, have always contributed generously to political campaigns and donated their time and influence in support of candidates and legislators who understand and value the contribution that Texas A&M, the A&M System, and indeed all higher education make to the economic and social vitality of Texas. The active participation of these individuals in support of state officials has been positive and deeply appreciated. Furthermore, direct



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personal participation and involvement are still needed and this effort will not take their place.

Over the past two decades, as a result of election and ethics reform laws, the political campaign finance landscape has been transformed in order to make more transparent the amount and source of contributions made in behalf of groups of individuals who share a common interest. Today, political action committees are the legally designated and accountable organizations through which like-minded groups of individuals can participate responsibly in the political process.

PACs serve a significant public purpose by allowing a group of individuals with like interests to "pool" and be accountable for their contributions in order to raise awareness of their common interest in the public policy arena. Since the early '90s, alumni and supporters of several other institutions and systems of higher education in Texas have formed PACs so that they can express appreciation to elected officials who have supported their institutions, and help them defray the cost of their political

campaigns. The use of PACs to raise the level of recognition of those institutions' needs has proven the old adage "there is strength in numbers."

In the aftermath of a particularly challenging session, prominent Aggies interested in forming an A&M PAC began meeting in earnest in May 1995. Thereafter, these and other individuals devoted countless hours of their time discussing the pros and cons of a PAC that would include all supporters of the A&M System. These individuals knew the importance and significance of establishing a PAC that would benefit the A&M System. It was on the shoulders of these visionaries, who are to this day Aggie-loving former students and supporters, that the formation of the A&M PAC became a reality in the late summer of 2006. Without their efforts and persistence none of this would have happened.

The name of the PAC itself signals that it represents the interests of friends and supporters of Texas A&M and all of the other member institutions and agencies of The Texas A&M University System, which includes nine universities, seven agencies, and the Health Sci-

ence Center. Once the PAC was formed, a board of trustees was installed, and they began the task of moving this new entity forward. The Board of Trustees include its chair, Chuck Ellison '76 of College Station, Carri Baker Wells '84 of San Antonio, Arno Krebs '64 of Bryan (formerly of Houston), and Don K. Clark of Houston, a 1967 graduate of Prairie View A&M University.

During the past year, more than 300 friends and supporters of Texas A&M and the A&M System institutions and agencies have contributed funds needed to express appreciation and help defray the necessary campaign expenses of elected officials who meet the designated criteria.

Based on the firm principle that the activities of the PAC are to play a supporting role in the legislative work of the regents, the chancellor and his staff, and the System presidents/agency heads, the PAC established strict guidelines that set forth the criteria for determining which elected officials to financially support. This support is provided on a bipartisan basis to legislators who serve on committees that are decision-makers for higher education and System agencies, to legislators who are former students, to legislators who have member institutions or agency centers in their districts, and to statewide elected officials who provide support to A&M System entities.

In addition, the leaders of the A&M PAC are committed to adhere strictly to the Texas Ethics Laws in all of its activities, including the accounting and reporting of receipts and disbursements of all funds and compliance with all reporting requirements. The PAC leaders are acutely aware that in receiving and disbursing donors' contributions, they are dealing with donors' hard-earned funds and along with that goes the highest responsibility to prudence and accountability in all they do. 🍷

The PAC welcomes any inquiries regarding it and its activities. Please direct your inquiries to Mike White, secretary/treasurer of the A&M PAC, at mikewhite@prismnet.com, or contact any of the trustees. You can also visit the A&M PAC's website at tamuspac.org to find more information about the PAC.