

Military looks to expand files of student info

Some worry about effects on privacy

BY WHITNEY ISENHOWER
STAFF WRITER

Social Security numbers, birth dates and grade point averages of high-school juniors and seniors, and some college students will soon be compiled into a Pentagon database.

The information already is available in separate databases for the four military offices — the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines — and has been collected periodically since 1982, said Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke, a spokeswoman for the Pentagon.

E-mail addresses, ethnicity and school subjects studied are among the other information included in the database.

Krenke said having information that is already available to the government's defense branch in one place makes it easier for all involved.

"We're not duplicating effort, and we're saving taxpayer money," she said.

But others argue that such information has never been compiled into a database.

"One of the defenses is that there's already a database," said Dane von-Brechenruchardt, president of the U.S. Bill of Rights Foundation. "I don't think that's true."

He said the only information currently kept by the Department of Defense in regard to military recruitment is one's draft registration status and current address.

Critics of the database also question whether gathering this type of information is merely for consolidation purposes.

"It's designed to help them market joining the military to students," said Jim Harper, director of infor-

mation policy studies at the CATO Institute, a conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C.

"Particularly with the dangers involved in Iraq and Afghanistan, it's a little bit harder to get people to join now."

Krenke said this particular list began in 2003 by the Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies branch of the department.

Krenke also said the only reason Social Security numbers were collected was for accuracy purposes. She said they were the most accurate way to make sure everyone is correctly accounted for in the database and to avoid duplications.

She said the numbers would only be distributed within the branch.

But critics worry that having that much information about individuals in one place could make it attractive to computer hackers, or the government might share the information with other companies.

"A database that big with that many people is a target," Harper said.

But Krenke said officials do not plan to distribute the information.

"According to the Federal Register notice, it can be requested by other organizations," she said, "but our intention is only to share it with the military services."

Krenke also said the database is not mandatory, and those who wanted to opt out of it could apply to do so.

Despite the possibility of omission from the database, UNC senior Maggie Rechel, a political science major, said she wonders why the government would maintain such a list.

"It's unnecessary and an invasion of privacy."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Leaders concerned by fire coverage

Officials uneasy on bill's funding

BY BRIANNA BISHOP
CITY EDITOR

A missing item in the N.C. House budget has caught the eye of Chapel Hill Mayor Kevin Foy and other municipal officials throughout the state.

While funding for fire protection for state-owned properties — a request that was included in Chapel Hill's legislative agenda — made it into the governor's budget and N.C. Senate's proposed budget for 2005-06, it was left out of the House budget.

"As those state institutions grow, the ability of the host community to provide fire protection is compromised," Foy said.

The \$1 million a year that would go into fire departments like Chapel Hill's would allow the town to create four additional posts for firefighters, Foy said.

"In Chapel Hill, our fire chief said that we need 18 new firefighters in order to be able to provide the level of service that is necessary," he said.

Foy noted that though the University is putting millions of dollars into construction projects, no extra funds are being allotted to support fire protection.

At the legislative breakfast in March, Foy indicated that the fire department was underfunded by about \$500,000.

Chapel Hill is not the only community that could be affected by the loss.

Durham, Raleigh, Boone and Wilmington are among some of the towns that might feel this impact.

Mayor Mel Cohen of Morganton is working with Foy to relaunch a campaign confronting the issue.

They are asking for municipal officials and fire chiefs to contact the representatives in hopes of getting the funding into the final

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KEVIN FOY, MAYOR

budget.

The message they hope to convey through this effort is that they support the fire protection increase include in the Senate and governor's budget.

The campaign began as an effort on the parts of Foy, Cohen, Greenville Mayor Don Parrott and Chapel Hill Fire Chief Dan Jones to bring this issue to the attention of the governor's budget aide.

Foy said the purpose of the campaign is to ensure that legislators around the state understand though this is a relatively small amount of money, it is in fact necessary.

Rep. Verla Insko, D-Orange, said the item is now on the flagged

list, so it can come back for consideration.

She said some representatives questioned the funding because of the benefits associated with towns with many state-owned properties.

Some officials, she said, thought that because of those benefits, the communities should be willing to provide fire protection.

But she added that had she been aware of that conversation, she would've argued in favor of the towns.

"This is an opportunity we don't want to let slip through our fingers," she said.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Moratorium bill limps along in House

BY WHITNEY ISENHOWER
STAFF WRITER

More than five weeks after the statewide moratorium on executions was slated to come to a vote, legislators say the bill's future still is up in the air.

The N.C. House moratorium proposes a two-year halt on all death penalty sentences ordered before this year and a study to be conducted to examine possible discrepancies in the system.

Since legislators delayed a vote on the bill just before the June 2 crossover deadline, it has been referred to four committees in about a month.

Now the bill rests in the House Judiciary I committee where the bill's primary sponsor, Rep. Joe Hackney, D-Orange, says he is amending the bill.

Hackney, who chairs the committee, wouldn't say exactly what changes he is making.

"Judiciary I is the proper place

to work on the substance of that bill," said Hackney.

"That's the committee that considered the first version, and it's the appropriate place to consider the subsequent versions."

Hackney said he is amending the bill because it didn't have enough votes for passage.

The first bill narrowly passed the committee by a vote of 8-6.

Though some feel the process is taking more time than usual, Hackney said amending and re-directing the bill to various committees is a common procedure.

"I don't think that it has been delayed," he said. "It's been considered in the normal course of business."

But the number of bills brought up during this legislative session could have slowed the moratorium bill's process, said Rep. Bill Owens, D-Camden.

"This year there's been a greater number of bills drafted than normal," he said.

Though it has moved between committees and sees future amendments, some lawmakers say the bill could pass this session.

"I think it's slim, but there's a chance of it passing," said Rep. Jim Crawford, D-Granville.

Crawford said he is a supporter of the bill.

"I don't want to put anybody to death that's not guilty," he said.

In 2003 the N.C. Senate became the South's first legislative body to approve a moratorium, but that legislation failed to pass in the House.

The exoneration of former death row inmates Darryl Hunt and Alan Gell called attention to possible problems in the death penalty system.

Hunt spent 18 years in prison for the 1984 murder of Deborah Sykes before a DNA test helped prove his innocence.

Gell was given a new trial after a judge found the N.C. Attorney General's office withheld evidence from his 1995 trial, in which he was found guilty of killing Allen Ray Jenkins.

"I would have thought a case like mine would make everybody say ... 'We need to get this fixed. How did this happen?'" Gell said.

House Speaker Jim Black, D-Mecklenburg, has said that even if the moratorium doesn't pass he will create a panel to study the death penalty.

Gell said the bill is probably in the everyday thoughts of inmates.

"This moratorium study would kind of be like the answer to my prayers if I were innocent and sitting on death row."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

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