Bush: Personal accounts can work

By Cassie Tomlin
ARIZONA DAILY WILDCAT

A U A student was banned from attending President Bush’s Social Security forum at the Tucson Convention Center yesterday. UA Young Democrat Steven Gerner, a political science and pre-pharmacy sophomore, said he and three other Young Democrats had been waiting in line with their tickets for about 40 minutes when a staff member approached him and asked him to read his T-shirt.

Gerner was the only one of the four wearing a UAYD T-shirt, which read, “Don’t be a smart (image of a donkey), the Democratic Party symbol, UA Young Democrats.”

Gerner said the staffer, who refused to provide his name, asked for Gerner’s ticket and crumpled it up.

“The staffer walked away, returned in 20 minutes, and told Gerner his name had been added to a list banning him from entering the convention center for the speech.”

“I was certainly shocked,” Gerner said. “Everyone should have access to this information.”

Gerner said he obtained a free ticket to the speech from the office of Congressman Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz. The ticket had his name printed on it.

“I really wanted a chance to hear the Bush side of the Social Security debate,” Gerner said. “Unfortunately, I won’t hear all the facts now, first-person.”

Kate Calhoun, TCC sales and marketing manager, said the venue’s staff did not control entrance to the event, but said the Secret Service was taking tickets and exercising “no discrimination whatsoever.”

“The venue does not issue or check or take tickets,” Calhoun said. “It’s coming straight from the White House — we rent the space and don’t get involved. It was a smooth operation from start to finish, and I did not see anyone denied entry.”

Bush campaign pushes for permanent fix

By J. Ferguson
ARIZONA DAILY WILDCAT

President Bush brought his 60-city, 60-day campaign to change Social Security yesterday to the 17th stop at the Tucson Convention Center. Approximately 3,500 people packed TCC to attend the private, invitation-only town hall discussion on Social Security. The crowd, most who received their tickets from local congressional offices, cheered enthusiastically as Bush unveiled a broad plan to use personal accounts to address a future Social Security crisis.

Bush was cautious to assure the hundreds of retirees in the audience their Social Security benefits will not be changed under his proposed plan.

“If you are a person receiving a Social Security check, nothing is going to change,” Bush said. “The safety net is in good shape for people born before 1950.”

The president suggested for those born after 1950, there are holes in the “safety net” Social Security provides. By 2018, projections suggest Social Security will become insolvent with more money going out in payments than collected in taxes.

Bush blamed the insolvency on a “trifecta” of problems plaguing Social Security: the retirement of millions of baby boomers, the rising life expectancy of retirees and better retirement benefits than previous generations.

Bush suggested the use of personal savings accounts could be the cure for the ailing Social Security system. He said the accounts would be a mixture of stocks and bonds workers under 55 years old could invest a portion of their payroll taxes in. Past contributions are collected to pay for Social Security benefits.

The proposed plan would be similar to the federal thrift plan, which allows federal workers to invest in a handful of conservative funds.