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Legislature shows no sign of tax increase

Going into the final week, the Legislature showed all signs of avoiding a major tax increase, something that many cars a few months ago could not be done.

All budget hopes rested in the conference committee which is trying to work out \$400 million worth of differences between the versions passed by the House and Senate.

The conferees once again are reviewing state agency budgets, searching for fat to trim, but one major issue is whether to give state employees a raise, and how much.

The House approved a three percent increase, the Senate provided none.

The governor has wisely avoided being drawn into the fray by groups wanting him to veto any budget without a built-in pay hike.

"I'm not promising any yeses," he said. "We're trying to pass good legislation."



STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Lyndell Williams
TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION

Blue Law repeal

The Texas Blue Law moved closer to repeal when the Senate tackled on several amendments and sent it back to the House for concurrence.

The new law would allow Sunday sales for all products except automobiles. Present law bans the sale of 42 items on consecutive weekend days.

The measure, if it becomes law, is expected to add some \$24 million or more in sales tax revenues to state coffers.

Strapped for cash

Rural retailers fought the measure, and Biblical warnings of punishment for Sunday toilers were scattered throughout the debate. But the argument won out that new lifestyles, where both parents work in many families, make the old tradition burdensome.

The House approved legislation which is sure to set many Texans to grumbling: a

mandatory buckled seat belt law.

Automobile safety

Texas is a top target in the latest battle over automobile safety. Under the current Department of Transportation (DOT) decree, automakers must install air bags in all cars by 1989 - unless states representing two-thirds of the nation's population adopt laws requiring the use of seat belts.

Obviously Texas, with a large population, is a major prize in this battle of belts versus bags. The question is which patch would best reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on Texas streets and highways?

The American motorist should have access to both seat belts and cars equipped with air bags - not one or the other.

Air bags and seat belts work together to provide the best crash protection. The DOT estimates that the combination of air bags and mandatory seat belt use laws would save twice as many lives as MIA alone.

Even in countries with belt-use laws, fatalities and injuries have dropped far less than expected. In Canada, the use of seat belts increased significantly, but deaths of front seat occupants decreased only 11 percent and injuries six percent.

Use rates in England reached 96 percent, but front seat fatalities were only reduced by 28 percent and injuries by 26 percent.

The reason: People insist only to comply with a belt-use law are those most likely to be in an auto accident - the young, drunk drivers, and rural and nighttime drivers. No law that attempts to alter the behavior of 17-million licensed

drivers will save as many lives as one rule that simply alters the designs of our cars to include air bags.

Even for people who do buckle up, seat belts are all too often insufficient to prevent injuries. Experience shows that seat belt wearers have sustained head, face and torso injuries and even death in car crashes.

According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, 2,546 people were killed and 199,203 injured in car, truck and bus accidents in Texas in 1984. Of those, 78 people were killed and 26,120 were injured while wearing a seat belt. Seat belts alone are not enough.

Since the DOT omitted any requirement that a state's belt law actually lower the body count, an ineffective state law that helps kill the federal safety requirement for automatic protection is a real possibility. The irony is that as few as 16 states could pass a seat belt

law and thus kill the standard that allows all motorists to have the protection of an air bag. In 16 states we would improve safety, while 34 states would have no auto safety protection at all.

This is outrageous. We must remember that a law is only as good as its enforcement and compliance.

So what's the answer to this massive problem?

Since federal law preempts states from regulating automakers, the only alternative is to regulate motorists. Under the circumstances, the best way state can do is to enact the strongest possible auto safety legislation - legislation that mandates an enforceable seat belt law and that requires like continued implementation of air bags in all new cars as ordered by the Department of Transportation's timetable in Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 208.

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STATE CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Lyndell Williams
TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION

The good news for the grumblers is the new law would apply only to persons in the front seat. The bad news is a \$25 to \$50 fine if you're caught unbuckled.

A federal order has mandated that two-thirds of the U.S. population be protected through seat belt laws or installed air bags by 1989. Seat belts are cheaper.

Texas lawmakers, wary of the wrath of Texas pick-up truck drivers, tried to exempt certain types of trucks from the requirement with what came to be dubbed "the Bubba amendment."

"Bubba may think he's got a right to drive 75 mph and drink a six-pack of beer driving into the sunset. But Bubba doesn't have to right to injure you or himself on the highway. We outlawed suicide a long time ago," said Bill Messer, the sponsor.

State officials last week signed an agreement to end the costly prison system lawsuit and send it to the federal judge who rocked the legislature six years ago with court-ordered reforms.

The proposal calls for an 11.7 percent reduction in inmates now in prison, and costs \$173 million.

Prison board chairman Robert Gunn warned persons who might try to sabotage the pact that "the war is over and the side of reform has won."

Others said the settlement will be a landmark that will lead to new direction in the state criminal justice system.

"It's just crazy to try to build all the new prisons they will have to build just to keep even," one reformer said.

Wiretap update

After a Houston senator filibustered for over 12 hours against it, the Senate amended the wiretapping law to allow covert entries to plant wiretaps.

The new law would extend wiretap use, but requires that court orders be necessary to install wiretaps and pen registers, a device recording only phone numbers dialed out of a line.

Indictments thrown out
Felony indictments against state sen. Carl Parker, D-Port Arthur, were thrown out by a

state district judge last week who ruled that a grand jury member was serving improperly.

Parker was accused of criminal drug and pornography offenses, but claimed innocence.

Earlier this year, Parker was indicted on porno and prostitution charges, but a state judge threw out the charges on grounds of improper grand jury conduct.

Last week's ruling marked the end of a second attempt by the local district attorney's office to try Parker. The DA said he will not pursue it further.

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Primary teacher honored

Mrs. Mae Ashby is pictured with peers as she was presented with a crystal dish by the Eagle Lake Primary School faculty and staff. Mrs. Ashby has completed her 35th year in public school teaching in Eagle Lake. Her competency has been unquestioned throughout the years and this fact was further exemplified as she was the first career ladder teacher selected to serve on the Rice School District committee this year.

ELPS PHOTO

Youth summer arts program set, sponsored by Live Oak Art Club

The Live Oak Art Club of Columbus has scheduled Friday, May 24 as pre-registration day for its Youth Summer Arts program. Those wanting to enroll early for classes in pottery, drawing and pastels, and water color will be able to sign up at 10 a.m. at the Art Club room, 930 Travis Street in Columbus. Responding to the interested acceptance of these courses in past summers, three volunteer artists have agreed to extend teaching periods this summer to four hours for each course. For further information call 782-2127, 782-9792 or 782-3676.

Museum Notes

Students in the fourth and fifth grades of Eagle Lake Middle School have been introduced to our museum. They were accompanied by their teachers whose names follow: fourth grade - Blanche Fowler, June Morgan, and Delores Grammer.

Fifth grade - Carole Pavlik, Jeanette Wood, Diane Schneider, and Jan Munn. Earnestine Carroll was the bus driver for all of these groups.

We hope these students will want to visit the museum during their summer vacation. Bill Harrison Sr., our curator, was happy to conduct the tours for these young students.

On Wednesday, May 15 Pat Herndt who is the social activities director for the Heritage House accompanied the following residents for a visit to the museum: Docia Bowen, Emma Randall, and Raymond Harper. We hope other residents will be visiting.

Did you hear and see Doug Johnson on Channel 2 Monday, May 13? He had been here May 10 to speak at the President's Luncheon, which was the closing activity for the 1984-85 Eagle Lake Study Club year. He spoke on TV of the Prairie Edge Museum, Bibby Fraxar gave him information about our museum when the two were among those seated at the head table. She also gave him one of our bumper stickers. Remember to purchase these from museum members or at the sales counter.

Have you been intending for many years to read "Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Bronte or "Great Expectations" by Charles Dickens? Both of these hard back classic novels are on sale in our used-book collection for only one dollar. There are, among other books, many copies of "Reader's Digest Condensed Books." All books including paper backs are priced at 25 cents and \$1. Please continue to bring in your donations of used books on Saturdays and Sundays between 2 and 5 p.m.

Prairie Edge Museum friends are working on a very beautiful quilt to help observe our state's sesquicentennial. Each quilt square will feature an embroidered logo significant to our town and community. Hopefully, individuals will have the privilege of having their signatures on the borders around the squares. I plan to publish a list of the logos that have been embroidered.

Soon I want to write an account concerning an old steamer truck which has been donated. In one of the cases showing

banking business there is an envelope mailed by the Eagle Lake State Bank in 1912. The posted for local delivery was one cent. On the envelope are four pictures of the following local scenes and buildings: Rice Mill, the Sugar Refinery, City Square and Park, and the school building used before the one constructed in the middle 1920's. Another display case contains a sheet of Eagle Lake Chamber of Commerce stationery. Among the interesting bits of information are the following: "At the Junction of Three Railroads. Fourteen Passenger Trains Daily." "District Headquarters of the

American Rice Growers Association" and "On Hard Surfacted Main Line Highway between Houston and San Antonio."

The museum is privileged to possess a copy of "A Prairie Kid Grows Up" by Ralph D. McCormick and the July 1, 1976 copy of The Eagle Lake Headlight with the greeting "Happy Bicentennial American."

Robert Wied has donated the following three interesting items: an old hand plunger used in the wash tub or wash pots, a big log hook, and a big bone that is the socket for a knee joint.

Elizabeth Boothe, reporter

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Class of 1935 of Columbus school reunion held May 18

The Golden year of Class 1935 of Columbus High School celebrated their reunion on Saturday, May 18 with lunch at Schabel's Restaurant.

An open house was held later in the lovely home of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Holcomb. Many friends and graduates came by to visit.

The 1935 class had 22 graduates which 14 were present. Two could not come and six are deceased. Three teachers also were present. Mrs. Annie Matern Kohlsfel of Eagle Lake was present to celebrate this reunion.

Those present who enjoyed catching up on the past 43 years were Mrs. Madelyn Frederickson Rosenthal of Pinesville, Md., Mrs. Helen Lohrman Green of El Campo, Mrs. Gladys Wanja Rau, Roy Stallman and Ann of Columbus. Mrs. Madelyn Staff Novasod and Arnold of Ganssod, Mrs. Esther Miculka New and R.L. of Eagle Lake, Mrs. Clara Malek Riba of Yorkum, and Mrs. Viola Faykus Zboril and Bill Lawrence Stallman and Jeanette, Louis Crank and Leona, Truman Engstrom, all of Garwood.

The old class prophecy was read by Gladys Rau and the class history was read by Viola Zboril. Plans are being made for a reunion in 1988 encompassing the classes of 1941, 42 and 43.

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