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Attorney General Abbott Lodges Clawback Complaint

AUSTIN — Texas and other states on March 3 filed suit against the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services over how states are forced to fund the new federal prescription drug benefit.

Attorney General Greg Abbott, on behalf of Texas, Kentucky, Maine, New Jersey, and Missouri, presented the U.S. Supreme Court with a complaint about the requirement that states pay a portion of the costs as-

sociated with federal Medicare drug coverage for persons eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid.

Abbott questioned the constitutionality of annual "clawback" payments — money states must send each month to the federal government to compensate for savings Congress anticipates states will realize from no longer providing prescription drug coverage for individuals enrolled in Medicaid.

The program is projected to result in net losses to Texas of approximately \$100 million from 2006-2009.

Texas Lottery drops bonus ball
After soliciting public comments on how to shore up sagging participation in Lotto Texas the Texas Lottery Commission on Feb. 27 jettisoned the "bonus ball."

The commission revised the game, which debuts April 23, so that players will pick six numbers from a field of 54.

"While there may not be an immediate and magic fix to the decline of our Lotto Texas game," said Lottery Commission Chairman C. Thomas Clowe, "I feel it's our responsibility to take action today to remove the one feature we've heard players disapprove of the most, the bonus-ball feature, and change Lotto Texas back to a pick-six game."

Without the bonus ball, the odds of winning the jackpot will be one in 25.8 million and overall odds of winning any prize will be one in 71, the agency said.

Court hears redistricting case

The U.S. Supreme Court on March 1 heard arguments in the Texas redistricting case relating to the November 2004 election and the dynamics that set the stage for a shift from a 17-15 seat majority for Democrats to a 21-16 seat majority for Republicans.

Attorneys for Mexican-American and African-American plaintiffs said the Texas Legislature violated the federal Voting Rights Act by watering down communities of interest and thus, voting power, in moving district lines.

Furthermore, attorneys for Democratic state legislators said it was unprecedented for district boundaries to be redrawn in the middle of a decade. Federal law requires redistricting after the U.S. Census is taken every 10 years, at the beginning of each decade.

In its defense, the state of Texas argued that it is the Legislature's privilege and legal responsibility to redraw districts when the collective will exists.

The court is expected to render a

decision on the case before its term ends in June.

Award recognizes voter turnout

On March 2 — Texas Independence Day — Secretary of State Roger Williams presented Travis and King counties with the first annual Stephen F. Austin Champions of the Republic Award.

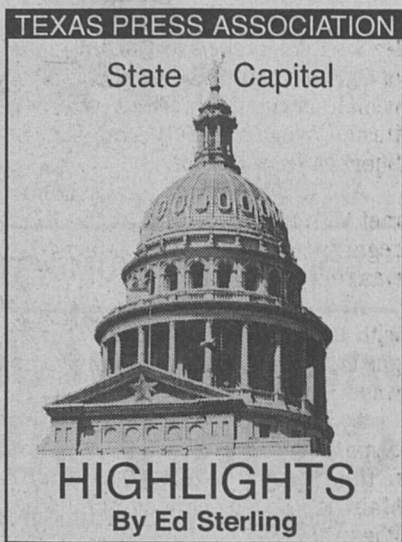
The award recognizes the counties for having the highest percentage of voter turnout in the November constitutional amendment election.

King County's 54 percent was the highest voter turnout for small counties and Travis County won the large county group with 25 percent.

Magazine cites Texas job growth

Gov. Rick Perry announced Site Selection magazine, a national business expansion and relocation tome, has for the second straight year awarded its Governor's Cup to Texas for the most job creation announcements in the nation for 2005.

To be counted, businesses must have a capital investment of at least



\$1 million, create 50 or more jobs or involve 20,000 square feet of new floor space. Texas secured 842 such projects in 2005 — a 26 percent increase from the previous year, Perry's office said.

The magazine also cited two Texas metropolitan areas among the strongest in the nation for job growth. The Dallas-Forth Worth metro area ranked second and the Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown metro area ranked third.

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FSA Allocates

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) allocates a portion of its farm loan program funds specifically for socially disadvantaged applicants (SDA) including minority and women

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Loan Funds For Disadvantaged Farmers

producers.

"FSA farm loans are available to all qualified applicants, but by setting aside funds specifically for minorities and women, the Agency ensures members of these specific groups can receive a portion of available funds - assuming they meet FSA loan eligibility requirements," said Tim Respondek, Farm Loan Manager for Colorado County FSA.

By FSA definition, an applicant is considered socially disadvantaged if he or she is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice, without regard to individual qualities. FSA has identified socially disadvantaged groups as Women, Blacks, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asians, and Pacific Islanders.

FSA offers both direct and guaranteed farm loans. Farm loan funds can be used to purchase farms, livestock and equipment. They may also be used to operate a farm, build or repair ser-

vice buildings, pay for soil and water conservation practices, and in some cases refinance debt.

For direct loans made by FSA to purchase a farm the terms may extend to 40 years with a current interest rate of five and one eighth (5.1250%) percent. Direct operating loans may be made for one to seven years with a current interest rate of four and seven eighths (4.8750%) percent, which is subject to change.

"Applicants requesting direct real estate loans should be aware that funding for this program is limited and may require a waiting period before funds are available and applications approved," said Respondek.

FSA guaranteed loans are made by banks or other commercial lenders and are guaranteed by FSA for up to 90 percent of any loss. The guaranteed loan program includes both operating and real estate loan programs. If a loan applicant is able to obtain financing from a private lender equal to 50 percent or more of the total funds

needed to jointly finance the purchase of the farm, the interest rate on the FSA direct loan would be fixed at five (5.000%) percent.

SDA loan applicants do not receive automatic approval. Individuals must be U.S. citizens with a satisfactory history of meeting credit obligations, have sufficient education, training or experience managing or operating a farm, possess the legal capacity to incur debt, and be unable to obtain credit through traditional lending means.

"Qualified loan candidates are provided information and assistance to develop sound management practices, analyze problems and utilize available resources essential for successful farming in the ever[changing agricultural environment]," said Respondek.

For more information regarding FSA loan programs, contact the Austin County FSA office at 979/865-3138 or visit the USDA Web site at <http://www.usda.gov>.

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Let's Look Back...

24 & 48 YEARS AGO

Feb. 25, 1982

Kay Clippson was named sweetheart of Xi Pi Psi sorority. Mary Ann Wood was named sweetheart of Alpha Delta Phi...

A theft at Bill's Dollar Store was solved in five minutes...

Michaelanne Hefner, president of the student council, presented Arthur Lopez with a "Giant" Mr. Irresistible Heart. The contest was held Feb. 12 and sponsored by the Rice High School Student Council to celebrate Valentine's Day...

Lewis Tillman, former Rice High School track star will run the 800-meter relay at Wharton County Junior College in the first annual Pioneer relays...

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Morales celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary...

Mr. and Mrs. Danny Ishee are the pleased parents of a baby boy, William Robert, born Feb. 19 at Eagle Lake Community Hospital...

One of the area's most beloved and respected citizens, Benjamin Dexter Anderson Sr., of the Chesterville community passed away at the Eagle Lake Community Hospital Feb. 17...

Mr. and Mrs. I.G. Conner announced the arrival of a baby daughter, Tabitha, born Feb. 17 at Gulf Coast Medical Center in Wharton...

Tina Grahmann, an 8th grade student at Sheridan School was declared the Spelling Bee Champion...

Winners in the Houston Livestock Art Show from Eagle Lake Primary School are Juan Roque, Kari Sheaholm, Stacy Bentancourt, Elizabeth Stiles and Christopher Almanza...

Miss Elizabeth Popp of Nada was surprised on her 70th birthday Feb. 14 at her home...

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Leopold announced the birth of a baby girl, Chrissy Marie, Feb. 10 at Gulf Coast Medical Center in Wharton...

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. H. Harrison, her sister, Mrs. Grahman Jackson

and Mr. Jackson of Houston returned from a very enjoyable week long Caribbean Cruise aboard the S.S. Daphne (Costa Lines)...

Citizens throughout the Nada and Garwood community and elsewhere in the area were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Rev. Monsignor Aloysius A. Leopold of Nada who passed away from injuries received in an accident in Albuquerque, New Mexico...

Miss Stephanie Yvonne Rhodes, Rice High School junior, and daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Obie Rhodes of Eagle Lake was chosen Miss Black Essence for 1982...

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Farris enjoyed a week long stay in the Yucatan...

Congratulations to Hope Martinez, housekeeping supervisor for completing 35 years of services at the Eagle Lake Community Hospital on Feb. 17.

March 4, 1982

Vance Duncan celebrated his 30th birthday on Feb. 27 with a Birthday Extravaganza hosted by his sister and brother-in-law, Diane and Elliot Tucker at the Eagle Lake Community Center...

Wilhemina Andel, 85, mother of George Andel of Eagle Lake passed away Feb. 26 at a Ganado nursing home...

The Colorado County Chapter of The University of Texas Ex-Students Association named Ierna Yanez winner of their 1982 scholarship award...

Wharton Junior College Vocational Nursing student Beverly Bluntson of Eagle Lake received "bade of profession" from WCJC's Helen Pickett, R.N....

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kretzschmar returned home from a two week trip to the valley to attend the Holiday Rambler Travel Trailer rally at Fiesta Park in Harlingen...

Theresa Roberts, 18, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Daughtry Roberts was

elected Valentine Queen...

Rice High School top winners in the regional Scholastic Art competition were Arthur Lopez, Sharon Layton and Eugene Spears...

Carol Sue Crabb, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Crabb was listed on the Dean's honor list for the spring semester at the University of Texas...

Marine Sgt. George Moreno, son of Juan and Irene Moreno of Eagle Lake re-enlisted for six years while serving in Cherry Point, North Carolina...

Mrs. Thelma Alley Perry, 85, passed away in Houston Feb. 28...

Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Miller and Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Herman honored their granddaughters, Sharon Herman and Jennifer Ware with a birthday party on Feb. 28.

March 6, 1958

M.M. (Mac) Jones enters the race for the office of Justice of Peace. Also filing for the office is W.A. (Red) Barnett, owner of Eagle Barber Shop...

Mrs. C.R. (Margaret) Curry ended her employment at J.B. Smith Co. after 34 years of faithful service...

Mr. and Mrs. G.M. Longmire announce the engagement of their daughter, Carol Joy, to Herbert Heyne Dromgoole, son of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Heyne Dromgoole in June...

Richard Krenek and Lonnie Labay of the Garwood Future Farmers of America Chapter caught calves in the Houston Fat Stock Show last week...

The Sheridan High School Broncos basketball team, coached by Raymond Mayes, won third place in the Region VI Class B tournament in San Marcos by defeating Hutto 47-45 in double overtime. Hugo Helmcamp was high shooter for the Broncos with 19 points...

Playing the leading roles in the Kiwanis Club's play of "Around the World In A Daze" were Victor Scott and Mrs. Louise Balas.

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