

House Committee Works On Tax Reform Legislation

AUSTIN — The 79th Texas Legislature convened for its third special session on April 17.

The House began its work by splitting the tax reform plan crafted for Gov. Rick Perry by former state comptroller John Sharp and the 24-member Texas Tax Reform Commission into four separate pieces of legislation.

On an 8-1 vote, the House Ways & Means committee approved the first of those four bills, House Bill 1, by Reps. Warren Chisum, R-Pampa, and co-sponsors Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands, and Dan Branch, R-Dallas.

Rep. Mike Villareal, D-San Antonio, vice chairman of Ways & Means, cast the only vote against the bill. Villareal represents rich and poor school districts. He said the legislation widens the gap between rich and poor school districts in funding per student.

What the bill does, mainly
HB 1 buys down school district property taxes 17 cents to \$1.33 in the current year. An amended version of the bill contains a self-enrichment provision, letting local school districts conduct elections to add an extra 3 cents to the tax rate.

This buy down is supposed to give school districts "meaningful discretion" in setting tax rates. Chisum said his bill would satisfy the Texas Supreme Court order issued last fall that required the Legislature to meet in special session.

What to do with 'surplus'
However, with news from the state comptroller's office that the state budget surplus is \$8.2 billion rather than the \$4.3 billion reported earlier, the governor and others suggested using some of that money to buy down school property taxes much more: as low as 90 cents on the \$100 valuation of taxable property.

Advocacy groups for teachers and the poor argued that the state budget surplus is a phantom because of the longterm lag in teacher pay, inadequately funded health programs and a host of other needs. Others complained that HB 1 exacerbates the lack of equity in school funding, so the cost-per-student gap between rich districts and poor districts widens.

Full House to consider HB1
The amended version of HB 1 now moves to the full House for consider-

ation. Meanwhile, Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, offered SB 1, her version of school finance reform. It includes a \$2,000 raise for teachers.

But as concerns about teacher pay and the condition of public education in Texas pour in, the governor's office is holding fast its story, that until Gov. Perry changes his mind, the special session is only about one thing: lowering the tax rate.

Cigarette tax phase-in OK'd
House Ways & Means also approved a cigarette tax to help offset the cut in the property taxes.

Under the Perry-Sharp plan, the tax was a full dollar above the present tax of 41 cents per pack.

The committee instead adopted legislation by Rep. Peggy Hamric, R-Houston, phasing in a cigarette tax to increase by 55 cents after Sept. 1 and by another 25 cents in each of the two following years.

Committee OKs business tax
House Ways & Means also passed a business activity tax that would capture revenue from corporations — primarily legal and medical prac-

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State Capital



HIGHLIGHTS
By Ed Sterling

EAGLE LAKE WEATHER REPORT

Information Courtesy of Texas A&M University System
Agricultural Research and Experiment Station, Eagle Lake

Date	Temp (H/L)	Rainfall(in.)
Mon. 4-17-06	94/68	0.00
Tue. 3-18-06	91/67	0.00
Wed. 3-19-06	90/69	0.00
Thu. 3-20-06	NO	1.17
Fri. 3-21-06	NO	0.00
Sat. 4-22-06	86/62	0.00
Sun. 4-23-06	86/65	0.00

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Let's Look Back... 24 & 48 YEARS AGO

April 22, 1982
Star Award recipients at the FFA Parent/Member dinner were Kathy Ishee named Outstanding FFA Member for 1981-82; Patrick Labay, Star Agribusinessman; Roger Rutledge, Star Greenhand and winner of the Chapter Leadership Award; and Glen Hefner, Star Chapter Farmers for 1981-82...

Named Mr. and Miss RHS were David Shimek, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Shimek of Garwood and Renee Hunt, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dale Hunt of Garwood...

The Rice High School JV track team won first place at the Rice Invitational track meet. Team members are Dexter Thomas, Michael Davis, Vincent Dancy, Roger Meinecke, Charlie Amos, Michael Munoz and Charles Tillman...

Darrell Stancik, an 11-year-old sixth grade student at Eagle Lake

Middle School was a visitor at the Institute for Rehabilitation and Research in Houston...

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Locker McLean of Midland announced the engagement of their daughter, Sara Diane, to Clayton Alan Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Alton Smith of Garwood. The wedding will be held June 12 in Golf Course Road Church of Christ in Midland...

Four Eagle Lake ladies, Donna Wiese, Violet Mooney, Tommie Neiswender and Hazel Havens, returned home from a bus tour to Washington, D.C. traveling with the Lone Star Travelers...

Outstanding Conservation Teachers at the CSWCD banquet were Helen Berger of St. Mary's School in Nada and Mrs. Billie Kusey of Weimar who shared the honor...

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wick of Weimar were named the 1981 Resident Conservation Farmers of the Year at the Columbus Lions' Club annual conservation banquet...

Angel Farrow and Sandra Henderson returned from Birmingham, Alabama where they attended the 37th annual National Baptist Student Union Retreat with the Prairie View A&M Choir...

Mr. and Mrs. David Nelson announced the arrival of a son, Derek Russell on March 26...

Mr. and Mrs. James E. Anderson of Anson announced the engagement of their daughter, Charlotte Joan, to Madison Hunt Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Alton Smith of Garwood. The couple will exchange vows June 4 at the Anson Church of Christ...

Miss Debra Fudge of Altair, bride-elect of John Gregory of Robstown, was the honoree at three pre-nuptial courtesies in recent weeks. The couple plans a May 22 wedding at First Baptist Church in Eagle Lake...

An alert Eagle Lake city patrolman, Andy Munoz, interrupted an apparent burglary at Eagle Tractor, Inc. on E. Main St. on April 15...

A 47-year-old Eagle Lake man, Mildred E. Douglas, was killed instantly when he stepped in front

of a moving vehicle on FM 3013 on April 16...

Valedictorian and Salutatorian for the Class of 1982 at Rice High School are Renee Hunt and Denise Hyek, respectively.

May 1, 1958
Rev. Parke Smith, rector of Christ Episcopal Church, has accepted a call to be rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Bay City...

Misses Karol Jo Kallina and Rose Ann Miller are the valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively of the Garwood High School. Miss Kallina is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kallina, Sr. and Miss Miller is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Miller...

Eagle Lake High School student body elected four new cheerleaders and re-elected one to head the cheering for the 1958-59 school year. Miss Margaret Meitzen was re-elected cheerleader with Misses Wanda Davis, Lynda Powers, Mary Ann Uzzell and Clarissa Sheppard elected as the new cheerleaders...

Mrs. Will Walker of Eagle Lake is the proud grandmother of a baby granddaughter born April 25. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Walker of Sweeny, have named the little lady Mary Elizabeth...

The Eagle Lake High School Band scored a Second Division-plus rating at the Interscholastic League contests in Galena Park...

The engagement of Mary Bea Konvicka and Travis H. Arnold is being announced by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John S. Konvicka of Eagle Lake. The groom-elect's parents are Mr. and Mrs. Burton U. Arnold, also of Eagle Lake. The wedding will take place in June...

Gus Seaholm, son of Mr. and Mrs. Gardner Seaholm, celebrated his eighth birthday with a party on April 26...

Ricky Higgins, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Higgins, was honored with a party by his mother on the occasion of his fifth birthday April 16...

Paul Hernandez captured a two-headed baby turtle and plans to raise it to maturity.

Rice Consolidated Bond Election

Early Voting	Election Day
May 1 - May 9 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM @ Rice CISD Admin. Bldg Early Voting Available only Mon.-Friday	May 13 7:00 A.M. - 7:00 P.M. Eagle Lake Junior High Garwood Elementary Sheridan Elementary



Why two campuses in Eagle Lake?

- A buyer could not be found for either of the facilities.
- It would cost in the millions of dollars to upgrade one of the facilities to house all students, from Pre-K to 5th grade.
- Keeping both campuses open will keep the property values strong in the Eagle Lake subdivisions surrounding both campuses. If one of the schools were to close, the vacant building would significantly devalue the property around the building.
- There would be a more manageable number of children on each campus. Approximately 200 students on one campus and 250 on the other campus. This is similar to the number of children currently enrolled in each of the Sheridan and Garwood Schools.
- No significant difference in the cost of running the two campuses versus one campus. There will only be a slight increase in utility costs.
- Less traffic congestion when dropping off and picking up kids at school because the number of children at each campus is reduced to 1/2.



What improvements will be made to the two Eagle Lake Campuses?

- The current Eagle Lake Elementary School (ELES) will be reorganized for the 3rd, 4th & 5th grades.
- A new library and a new lobby will be built at the ELES.
- The current Eagle Lake Junior High (ELJH) will be reorganized to house grades Pre-K-2nd grades.
- The technology will be updated in both the current ELES building and ELJH building.
- Dilapidated and unusable portions of both buildings will be removed.

For more information email "ricebondelection@hotmail.com" or visit the website "wintermannlibrary.org". You may also call Clark Powers @ (979) 234-3238 or Laura Myres @ (979) 733-9949, Preston Little (979) 758-3778, Clark Peterson (979) 234-3171

Crimestoppers Offers Bleacher Theft Reward

Some time between the 2nd day of January 2006 and the 18th day of March 2006, some metal bleachers were stolen from the Colorado County Fair Grounds. The Colorado County Fair Ground is located at 1164 Cross Roads Blvd. in Columbus, Texas. The value of the stolen bleachers is estimated to be approximately \$3,000. The bleachers are long and would require a trailer to haul them.

If you have any information about this crime, or any other felony crime,

call Colorado County Crime Stoppers, toll free at 1-866-522-TIPS (1-866-522-8477). You never have to give your name and if your information leads to an arrest and charges being filed on the criminal, you could earn up to a \$1,000 reward.

Colorado County Crime Stoppers, citizens, law enforcement and the media, are working together to make our community a safer place to live. Together, we can make a difference.

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