



**THE EAGLE LAKE HEADLIGHT**  
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# Senate Reconsidering Major Portion Of Tax Proposed Tax Plan

AUSTIN — With two-thirds of a 30-day special session gone, the House and Senate continue to knock around a multi-part solution to fix the state's unconstitutional school district property tax system.

Troubles emerged when the Senate added amendments to "perfect" four of five House bills that, bundled together, run tandem with the governor's tax reform proposal.

Despite the buffeting, lawmakers on both ends of the Capitol building and the man in the governor's mansion seem confident that they will be

able to agree on a tax fix. House Bill 1, known as the "get out of Dodge" bill, is the kingpin. It taps the state's \$8 billion budget surplus to replace \$3 billion worth of ad valorem tax that would be owed by property owners under levies allowed by current law. If passed, the legislation may reduce property taxes by 11 percent this year and increase education funding by \$1.5 billion.

The House rejected the Senate's committee substitute to HB 1 because, among other things, it contained language allowing rich school districts

to recapture additional wealth. So, back to the Senate the bill went for reconciliation.

Now the Senate committee substitute is pending, leading to speculation that other related legislation might have to be reworked depending on changes to HB 1. Whatever happens, the Texas Supreme Court order says the property tax system must be fixed "or else."

HB 1 is awaiting a full Senate vote, but Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, says she has the votes to block it from being brought up. She has objected to amending language that would allow recapture of wealth by some districts.

Some say that if HB 1 alone passed and the other bills failed, it would still be enough to satisfy the Texas Supreme Court's order to give school districts meaningful discretion in setting tax rates. But most lawmakers seem committed to skipping the quick

fix and instead making changes to the tax code that would last for more than a couple of years.

**Other bills and what they do**

HB 2 earmarks for property tax relief excess revenue from franchise taxes, motor vehicle sales and use taxes, and taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products.

The House and Senate passed HB 3, a business activity tax that will be paid by all taxable entities. Firms will choose a mode of taxation based on either payroll or gross receipts. The bill is awaiting the governor's signature.

HB 4, the "liar's affidavit" bill, requires used car buyers to pay sales and use taxes on at least 80 percent of the book value of their purchase, instead of on the sale price, which could be just about anything. The House rejected the Senate version of this bill, so it has been sent to a conference committee in hopes that

differences can be worked out.

HB 5 jacks up the cigarette and other tobacco product tax by another dollar. The increase would go into effect Jan. 1, as currently written.

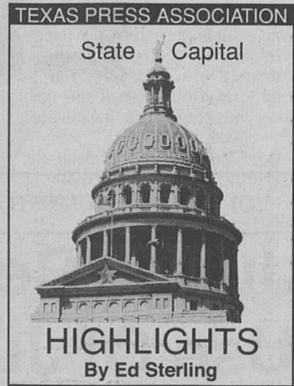
Opponents of HB 5 say that raising the cigarette tax by \$1 won't result in more revenue. Instead, they say, it will drive sales underground to the black market and on to the Internet.

HB 5 awaits approval by the full Senate before returning to the House for final approval.

**Welfare workers hold on to jobs**

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission had planned to privatize its eligibility screening duties, but shelved the idea for now.

With the prospect of 1,900 layoffs hovering above them, agency chief Albert Hawkins told employees there will be no layoffs for at least a year, and furthermore, they will each get an \$1,800 bonus.



**State expands emergency line**  
Hurricane season begins June 1. The state's 2-1-1 phone service has been expanded to allow Texans to call for help if they need transportation assistance when their community is ordered to evacuate.

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## Let's Look Back... 48 YEARS AGO

**May 15, 1958**  
Rural Route Mail Carrier Ed Hanly is cited by Post Office Regional Space Requirements Officer William Barney for having driven for 28 years over approximately 465,992 miles with out a single accident...  
Funeral services were held May 9 for Joseph Frybert of Eagle Lake who passed away Tuesday night. Interment was in the Holy Cross Catholic

Cemetery in East Bernard...  
**Walter Jones, son and Mr. and Mrs. M.M. Jones, won the coveted valedictorian honor with an average of 96.676 and John Pendergrass, son of Mr. and Mrs. J.N. Pendergrass, won the honor of salutatorian and had a nearly equal record of 96.675 compiled at Eagle Lake High School**

**Monday...**  
Mrs. John Svatek of Eagle Lake was selected the Texas A&M College's Mother of the Year. She is the mother of 14 children...  
Mr. and Mrs. Billy Maness announced the arrival of a son, Duane Neal, born May 11 in Laughlin Hospital...

**Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Gibson are the proud parents of a son born May 7 in Laughlin Hospital. He has been named Jerry Wayne...**  
Vickie Frederickson was complimented with a party by her mother, Mrs. V.L. Frederickson, on May 10 on the occasion of her ninth birthday.

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**LCRA Sets Open Houses For Project**

Property owners and the general public in Wharton, Matagorda and Colorado counties will be able to discuss the LCRA-SAWS Water Project, including plans for off-channel water storage facilities, at three open houses in May.

The open houses will be come-and-go events to explain the water conservation and development project and get feedback from landowners about potential sites for the storage facilities that are part of the project.

The schedule is as follows: May 18, Bay City Civic Center; May 22, Colorado County Agricultural Complex, Columbus; and May 25, El Campo Civic Center. All of the meetings will be from 6 to 8 p.m.

In advance of the open houses, LCRA will communicate directly with landowners whose property may be in one of several potential alternative sites.

LCRA also wants to hear from property owners who might like their land to be considered.

The LCRA-SAWS Water Project is a joint effort by LCRA and the San Antonio Water System (SAWS) to conserve and develop water for the lower Colorado River basin and San Antonio region in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The project is in the third year of a six-year study to determine its environmental, financial and technical feasibility.

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