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## Senate Looks At Stimulus

Tuesday, approving nearly \$800 federal aid to state governments. Texas' share of this money is healthcare and almost \$4 billion for public and higher education.

Lt. Governor David Dewhurst said Tuesday that though he and his staff had just begun looking through the 1100 page bill, federal money could help the state

he said.

Because Texas' relative economic position is strong because of conservative fiscal policies, he said, Texas should look to maintain its fiscal independence. "This is Texas. We're fairly independent here, and it's because of that independence that we are as healthy as we are today," he said. "You can rest assured that the Texas Legislature will be very careful in going through these programs so that we can ensure that we maintain independence and the Texas spirit in the way these funds are expended."

among other areas.

Officials from the Texas Department of Public Safety testithe budget needs for this critical

Better compensation, he said, federal money could leave the will help DPS attract top candistate facing a deficit in future dates to state trooper positions. years. "We need to be careful on He also promoted the purchase how we use one time funds, so that of 450 additional marked police we're not painting ourselves into cruisers, at a cost to the state of

> Thursday about current trends in the prison population.

ing the last legislative session increase in HIV cases since 2003, have flattened inmate population growth, and have increased paroles and reduced the number of offenders sent back to prison for violating their probation.

Part of these trends are attributable to an increase in capacity at community-based intermediate sanction facilities, which hold low-

treatment programs has also contributed to reforms. Committee Member and Senate Criminal Justice Committee Chair John and its spread," he said. "The Whitmire praised the progress made since last session.

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Obama signed the American criminal justice and public safety, Recovery and Reinvestment Act billion in economic stimulus and estimated at about \$17 billion, including \$5 billion more for state

in those areas.

He did caution, however, that relying too heavily on one-time a deficit in 2011, but a number of \$27 million. these funds, I think, will be able to help us in these program areas,"

Finance Committee member Senator Robert Duncan of Lubbock said Wednesday that some of the federal provisions could come with strings attached.

765 million pounds during January, up 13 percent from last year's

December 2008 production

The number of milk cows

during January averaged 430,000

head, up 28,000 head from last

year and unchanged from the

1,780 pounds during January, 95

pounds more than last year.

Production per cow averaged

Milk production in the 23 states December 2008.

totaled 737 million pounds.

December 2008 number.

production.

AUSTIN - President Barack on the state budget, looking at criminal justice system is very

fied before the committee on Thursday, painting a picture of

At the top of their list is more money for employees, including state troopers. Texas Public Safety Commission Chairman Allan Polunsky pointed out that a state trooper can make as much as 40 percent less than his or her counterpart working for a city police force

Officials from the Legisla-

They said reforms made dur-

level offenders.

"We've got a lot of work left to The Finance Committee this do, we've got some problems, but week continued its deliberations overall I think the health of our

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good," he said. Senators announced the fil- 21 ing of several new initiatives this week, including a measure aimed at reining in abuses at electric

shoe Bay filed Senate Bill 921 Tuesday in response to reports of board and management misuse of funds and board elections irregu-Co-op, which serves thousands of customers in Central Texas.

SB 921 would require open meetings for all co-op board meetings, and would require co-ops to set guidelines for reimbursement, with money, it's another to be Mr. blower protection.

auditors to look into co-op books if

approved by the Legislative Audit Committee. tive Budget Board also testified Rodney Ellis announced a bill

intended to reduce the spread of HIV through Texas. Texas has seen a 30 percent

up to 62,000 cases in 2009. African-Americans are disproportionately affected, with infection rates four times higher than that of whites or Hispanics.

SB 877 would make HIV tests part of routine checkups, with an option for patients to opt out.

Ellis says increased testing is vital to checking the spread of More money for substance HIV in Texas. "Thankfully HIV is no longer a death sentence, but it is clear that early diagnosis is a key to fighting the disease sooner a person is made aware of their status, the sooner they will change their behavior, which will reduce the risk of transmitting the disease to others."

Texas already requires HIV tests for inmates entering or leaving Texas prisons, as well as for pregnant women.

## HOROSCOPES HOROSCOP ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20 Aries, patience is a virtue you

don't seem to have this week. But rushing others to get what you want is not the way to go about things. Put on the brakes.

TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21 Taurus, assess the situation from all angles before you weigh in with how you feel. This way you avoid any confrontations, or can

deftly explain your position. GEMINI - May 22/Jun 21 Jump into that new relationship with both feet, Gemini. It'll be the best decision you've made in quite some time, and you'll have a new partner to show for it.

CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22 Cancer, after doing for others for so long it's time you do for yourself. Don't feel bad about treating yourself well. If you are happy you can continue to brighten others' days.

LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23 Factor fun into the equation for the week, Leo. It's time to lighten up, kick back and relax. After being refreshed you can jump

back into the daily grind. VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

Resist the urge to take what everyone says to heart. An opinion is just that - an opinion. You don't necessarily have to follow what others say. Tuesday could be a challenge, Virgo.

LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Someone asks you an important question this week, Libra. Just when you thought you knew what you were going to say, you experience a change of heart. SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, you're back on top and now is the time to devote energy to staying in that position. Just don't work too much at it or else you'll foil all of your hard work.

SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec

You are undecided about a housing situation, Sagittarius. Take the advice of someone close to you who only has your best Senator Troy Fraser of Horse-interests at heart. A new friend is on the horizon.

CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20 The stress of too much planning leaves you a tad on the weary larities at the Pedernales Electric side, Capricorn. You just need to take a few days off and get back into the swing of things. Leo helps a lot.

AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18 It's one thing to be cautious use of co-op funds and whistle Scrooge, Aquarius. Now's the time to loosen the reigns on those bank It would also allow for state accounts and spend wisely. PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Surround yourself with friends this week, Pisces, and nothing Monday, Houston Senator will get you down. Birthday plans prove to be lots of fun. **FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS** 

**FEBRUARY 22** Lea Salonga, Actress (38) **FEBRUARY 23** Dakota Fanning, Actress (15) **FEBRUARY 24** Billy Zane, Actor (43)

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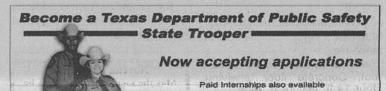
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1 percent from production in these same states in January 2008. December revised production, at 14.7 billion pounds, was up 1.8

percent from December 2007.

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