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HOROSCOPES HOROSCOPES

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/June 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 21

You are undecided about a housing situation, Sagittarius. Take the advice of someone close to you who only has your best 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 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 with money, it's another to be Mr. Scrooge, Aquarius. Now's the time to loosen the reigns on those bank accounts and spend wisely.

PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20
Surround yourself with friends this week, Pisces, and nothing 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)

FEBRUARY 25
Sean Astin, Actor (38)
FEBRUARY 26
Michael Bolton, Singer (56)
FEBRUARY 27
Howard Hesseman, Actor (69)
FEBRUARY 28
Robert Sean Leonard, Actor (40)

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Senate Looks At Stimulus Bill

AUSTIN - President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Tuesday, approving nearly \$800 billion in economic stimulus and federal aid to state governments. Texas' share of this money is estimated at about \$17 billion, including \$5 billion more for state 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 in those areas.

He did caution, however, that relying too heavily on one-time federal money could leave the state facing a deficit in future years. "We need to be careful on how we use one time funds, so that we're not painting ourselves into a deficit in 2011, but a number of these funds, I think, will be able to help us in these program areas," he said.

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

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."

The Finance Committee this week continued its deliberations

on the state budget, looking at criminal justice and public safety, among other areas.

Officials from the Texas Department of Public Safety testified before the committee on Thursday, painting a picture of the budget needs for this critical agency.

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.

Better compensation, he said, will help DPS attract top candidates to state trooper positions. He also promoted the purchase of 450 additional marked police cruisers, at a cost to the state of \$27 million.

Officials from the Legislative Budget Board also testified Thursday about current trends in the prison population.

They said reforms made during the last legislative session 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-level offenders.

More money for substance treatment programs has also contributed to reforms. Committee Member and Senate Criminal Justice Committee Chair John Whitmire praised the progress made since last session.

"We've got a lot of work left to do, we've got some problems, but overall I think the health of our

criminal justice system is very good," he said.

Senators announced the filing of several new initiatives this week, including a measure aimed at reining in abuses at electric co-ops.

Senator Troy Fraser of Horsehoe Bay filed Senate Bill 921 Tuesday in response to reports of board and management misuse of funds and board elections irregularities at the Pedernales Electric 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, use of co-op funds and whistle-blower protection.

It would also allow for state auditors to look into co-op books if approved by the Legislative Audit Committee.

Monday, Houston Senator Rodney Ellis announced a bill intended to reduce the spread of HIV through Texas.

Texas has seen a 30 percent increase in HIV cases since 2003, 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 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 and its spread," he said. "The 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.

Milk Production Up 13 Percent On Year

Texas milk production totaled 765 million pounds during January, up 13 percent from last year's production.

December 2008 production totaled 737 million pounds.

The number of milk cows during January averaged 430,000 head, up 28,000 head from last year and unchanged from the December 2008 number.

Production per cow averaged 1,780 pounds during January, 95 pounds more than last year.

Milk production in the 23 states

participating in the monthly survey totaled 14.9 billion pounds, up 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.

Production per cow during January averaged 1,746 pounds, 5 pounds above a year ago.

The average number of milk cows in the 23 states was 8.51 million head, 58,000 head more than last year but 12,000 head less than December 2008.

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