

THE EAGLE LAKE HEADLIGHT

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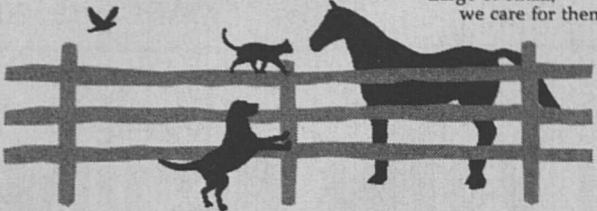
State Capital



HIGHLIGHTS
By Ed Sterling

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AUSTIN - Our Legislature is two steps closer to building a state budget for fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, and Rep. Jim Pitts, R-Waxahachie, on March 13 filed Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 1, the general appropriations bills.

SB 1 is scheduled for daily public hearings, March 16-21. HB 1 is scheduled for a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee, chaired by Pitts, on March 17. At these hearings, both versions of the budget will be marked up, voted out of their respective committees and sent to the full Senate and full House for approval.

The usual path to approval includes a stop in a conference committee of House and Senate members, who must reconcile any differences that emerge in the two bills.

The budget would total around \$170 billion, if it runs in parallel with projected needs expressed by the Legislative Budget Board. The current two-year budget, which ends Aug. 31, totaled out at \$168 billion.

The state revenue estimate provided by State Comptroller Susan Combs shows that for 2010-11, the state can expect to have \$77.1 billion in funds available for general-purpose spending. This represents a 10.5 percent decrease from the corresponding amount of funds available for

2008-09.

Still to be worked out is potential relief through a \$16 billion federal stimulus package, which the Legislative Budget Board said can be spent on:

The Medicaid match rate, transportation infrastructure, public school facilities, water and energy finance programs, and existing education, health and human services programs, and the Community Development Block Grant.

Also, money energy and weatherization assistance, affordable housing, criminal justice assistance grants, unemployment compensation, food stamps.

Gov. Rick Perry on March 12 rejected the \$555 million chunk of the federal stimulus meant to shore up state unemployment funding. He said the money has strings attached, and accepting it would mean Texas businesses would have to make higher unemployment payments.

All that, on top of continued uncertainties in the current economy that point to less revenue for the state to work with will make for lively debate over the next few weeks.

Dunnam files

transparency measure
 State Rep. Jim Dunnam, D-Waco, chair of the House Select Committee on Federal Economic Stabilization Funding, on March 10 filed HB 2942, the Texas

Government Accountability and Transparency Act of 2009. The bill is intended to strengthen legislators' ability to track and audit the use of stimulus money by state agencies and private entities.

Committee passes

Voter ID bill

The state Committee of the Whole Senate on March 11 passed SB 362, a "voter I.D." bill with all 19 Republicans and the lieutenant governor voting in favor and all 12 Democrats voting in opposition.

The bill's author, Sen. Troy Fraser, R-Horseshoe Bay, said the intent of his bill is to prevent unscrupulous individuals who would submit falsified voter registration applications and receive voter registration certificates.

Under SB 362, before casting a ballot, each voter would have to present an election clerk working at the poll with an acceptable government-issued identification card and their voter registration certificate. A list of acceptable forms of official identification would be posted at each poll.

Floor debate on March 10-11 took 23 hours, with Sen. Robert Duncan, R-Lubbock as chair. Democrats challenged the bill on parliamentary and constitutional grounds to no avail.

Some Republican members who spoke in favor asserted that evidence of widespread voter fraud exists in Texas and in other states.

Democrats said there was no proof of widespread voter fraud. They alleged the bill was part of a nationwide voter suppression effort and that if passed SB 362 would discriminate against older Texans, the poor, Hispanics and African-Americans, and in general, against Texans who do not have a driver's license.

An estimated 100 witnesses testified, some in favor, some against, and some neutral, as resource witnesses.

Current law only requires a citizen to present their voter registration certificate to vote.

SB 362 is certain to pass the full Senate and then will move to the House, where voter ID bills passed in 2005 and 2007, when Republicans enjoyed more of a majority. But the House is now composed of 76 Republicans and 74 Democrats, leaving the outcome subject to conjecture.

Let's Look Back...

24 YEARS AGO

April 11, 1985

Richard (Rick) L. Higgins has been appointed senior agricultural loan officer with the local farm credit organization, El Campo Production Credit Association. Higgins will be involved with business development and responsible for administrative and field credit service to the association's member-borrowers served by the El Campo branch office...

Patti Neil New and Rodney William Nolte are pleased to announce their engagement and approaching marriage. Patti is the daughter of Mrs. Eunice New and the late Baker New of Sheridan, and Rodney is the son

of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Nolte Sr. of Westhoff. The wedding will take place on Saturday, June 29 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Westhoff...

Ginger Kay Benton and Paul Joseph Furrow will exchange vows on Saturday, April 20 at the First United Methodist Church in East Bernard. Ginger is the daughter of Lanaria Eleon Muesse of East Bernard and Louis Donald Benton of Dallas. Paul is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Slayton of Valiant, Oklahoma...

Barbara Wilson is pleased to announce the engagement and approaching marriage of her daughter Deborah Ann, to Rob-

ert Lee Labay son of Lawrence and Agnes Labay of Nada. The two will be united in marriage on Saturday, May 11 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Nada...

Verna Mae Altman, 67, of Eagle Lake, passed away suddenly on Wednesday, April 3. She was born on July 24, 1917 at Taiton to Charles and Minna Schoenfeld Schumaker. Services were conducted at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 6 from the Dulany Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Edwin F. Lampe, pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Brenham, officiating. Burial was in New Ulm Cemetery...

Mrs. Genevieve Calvert Har-

lan, 77, of Eagle Lake, passed away Tuesday, April 9, at Eagle Lake Community Hospital. Grave-side services and interment is scheduled Wednesday, April 10, at 2 p.m., at the Masonic Cemetery in Eagle Lake, with the Rev. J. Melburn Sibley officiating...

Dale Stapleton, 77, of Eagle Lake, passed away on Thursday, April 4 at the Bay Villa Nursing Home in Bay City following a lengthy illness. The funeral was held at 4 p.m. Saturday, April 6 from Dulany Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. Johnny Kisiah and Rev. Bob James officiating. Burial was in Lakeside Cemetery...

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 Sunday: 7:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.

Colorado County Courthouse Report

Four individuals were sentenced in Colorado County District Court on Monday, March 16. They included:

- Anthony M. Barrios, man delivery of controlled substance. Sentenced to 20 years ID-TDCJ.
- Anthony M. Barrios, possession marijuana. Sentenced to 18 months state jail.
- Anthony M. Barrios, evading arrest/detention using vehicle. Sentenced to 18 months state jail.
- Adrian C. Garcia, assault causes bodily injury date/family/house. Sentenced to 180 days county jail, reduced to Class A misdemeanor.
- Adrian C. Garcia, aggravated assault with deadly weapon. Probation conditions modified BIPP Class added as condition.
- Brandie D. Gilley, forgery financial instrument. Sentenced to four years deferred adjudication.
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Marriage Licenses Issued
 Norman Clark Peterson and Melissa Ann Neubauer, March 2.
 Luis Resendiz Vega and Michelle Cheri Kazmir, March 2.
 Bradley Edward Polasek and Stephanie Lynn Hackfeld, March 4.
 Matthew Scott Priest and Andrea Elizabeth Scherer, March 9.
 Brian Wade Christen and Stacy Mandy Rosas, March 9.
 David Wayne Schriefer and Linda Lou Salazar, March 9.
 Charles Joseph Cernoch and Tara Suzanne Ulrich, March 11.

Sales Tax Payments Down 15.95 Percent

Sales tax payments to the city of Eagle Lake in March were \$13,916, a decrease of 15.95 percent from last March, figures from the state comptroller show.

For the year, payments totaled \$48,734, a decrease of 7.60 percent.

For March in Colorado County, payments totaled \$70,150, an increase of 11.17 percent.

For the year, payments totaled \$240,717, an increase of 8.27 percent.

For March in Fayette County, payments totaled \$85,700, an increase of 5.91 percent.

For the year, payments totaled \$305,118, an increase of 6.58 percent.

Checks sent to area cities, with changes from last year, are as follows:

- Columbus - \$82,151, up 8.18 percent; for the year, \$301,056, an increase of 11.91 percent;
- Weimar - \$22,862, down 13.84 percent; for the year, \$79,006, down 0.84 percent;
- Schulenburg - \$45,555, up 24.48 percent; for the year, \$150,406, up 9.21 percent;
- La Grange - \$99,920, down 8.78 percent; for the year, \$370,805, up 0.24 percent;

-Flatonina - \$7,863, down 2.44 percent; for the year, \$32,703, up 28.13 percent;

-Hallettsville - \$68,029, up 9.39 percent; for the year, \$252,284, up 7.62 percent.

State sales tax revenue in February totaled \$1.74 billion, down 2.6 percent compared to February 2008.

State Comptroller Susan Combs delivered \$433.4 million in March sales tax payments to Texas cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts.

Local sales tax allocations are down 0.6 percent compared to March 2008.

So far this calendar year, local sales tax allocations remain up 2.2 percent, compared to the first three months of 2008.

State sales tax revenue for February and March payments made to local governments represent sales that occurred in January.

"State sales tax collections declined in February as important sectors such as retail trade and construction continue to struggle," Combs said.

"While state sales tax revenue has grown 2.8 percent through

the first half of fiscal 2009, further declines are expected as the economy continues to weaken."

Combs sent March sales tax payments of \$291.1 million to Texas cities, down 0.7 percent compared to March 2008.

Since Jan. 1, city sales tax allocations are 1.5 percent higher than the same period last year.

Texas counties received sales tax payments of \$27.5 million, up 2.5 percent compared to one year ago.

Calendar year-to-date, county sales tax allocations are 7.2 percent higher than last year.

The 150 special purpose taxing districts around the state received \$17.3 million in sales tax revenue, up 21.6 percent compared to last March.

Ten local transit systems received \$97.4 million, down 4.3 percent.

For details of March sales tax payments to individual cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose districts, locate the Monthly Sales and Use Tax Allocation Comparison Summary Reports on the Comptroller's Web site at <http://www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/allocsum/compsum.html>.

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