

Doctors say '77 legislature didn't help insurance costs

United Press International
AUSTIN — Doctors complained yesterday that the 1977 legislature did not do enough to alleviate rising malpractice insurance costs. A compromise malpractice bill approved, 141-1 House, and Senate, only minutes before Monday midnight deadline that ended the 140-day session. The Texas Medical Association president, Dr. John M. Smith of Antonio, said doctors remain dissatisfied. The bill has some good provisions but many important recommendations by the Texas Senate and recommendations of the state's

malpractice study commission are ignored in the bill," Smith said. The legislation, which now goes to the governor, calls for a \$500,000 ceiling on awards for non-medical losses to patients injured by malpractice. The compromise drawn up by Rep. Tom Uher, (D-Bay City), discarded a provision senators included in their bill to limit awards for pain and suffering in malpractice cases to \$100,000. Uher also dropped Senate provisions reducing the size of malpractice awards if the patient received compensation from other sources such as health insurance

and allowing doctors to pay malpractice judgments in installments. "With many important provisions left out, the bill will not do an adequate job attacking the medical malpractice insurance crisis," Smith said. Sen. Ray Farabee, (D-Wichita Falls), Senate sponsor of doctor-backed malpractice legislation, refused to offer the compromise bill to senators. Sen. Don Adams, (D-Jasper), won Senate approval of the measure, saying "I think it is going to leave this state better than it is today." Adams said he believes the com-

promise legislation will mitigate against rising costs of malpractice insurance for doctors without damaging the rights of patients who sue over doctors' negligent treatment. Adams was the third sponsor of the malpractice bill in the Senate. Sen. A. R. Schwartz, (D-Galveston), originally sponsored a House-passed malpractice bill but disowned the measure after doctors won changes considered unacceptable by trial lawyers. Bitter disputes between doctors and trial lawyers marked the months of deliberations over malpractice legislation and came close to stopping any legislation.

Briscoe's priorities enacted by legislature

United Press International
AUSTIN — Gov. Dolph Briscoe yesterday the 1977 Texas Legislature, which adjourned Monday, approved legislation dealing with

three of his top four priorities. The governor said he had listed public education, public health, transportation and crime control as his four major priorities when he ad-

ressed the legislature in January. "I did not envision that my recommendations on any of these subjects would be adopted to the letter. But I can say with appreciation that three out of four of these top priorities I submitted have been substantially enacted into law," he said.

Mexico constructs pipeline to U.S.

United Press International
MEXICO CITY — Petroleos Mexicanos, the state petroleum monopoly, will build a 746-mile-long pipeline in order to boost exports to the United States. The announcement of the \$970 million project, Pemex director general Jorge Diaz Serrano said construction of the pipeline would begin soon and that it would take two years to complete. Gas should start flowing to the U.S. by 1979, he said. We hope to export one billion cubic feet daily by 1979, when the stage of the pipeline will be completed," Diaz Serrano said at a news conference. "And that's not all, by the end of administration in 1982, this figure should double," he said. Diaz Serrano said that at current rates this operation should give Mexico \$2.5 million in foreign earnings every day by 1982. The 48-inch diameter pipeline originates in the nation's richest fields, the Tabasco-Chiapas zone in southeastern Mexico, and follows a route to the Gulf of Mexico reaching Reynosa, across the border from McAllen, Tex. From there and from an intermediate point in Tampico, on the Gulf coast, several lines will be con-

nected with Monterrey and various U.S. border cities, he said. "We have already contacted several U.S. firms to discuss purchase and distribution of the fuel," Diaz Serrano said. "The idea to build the pipeline, which will be constructed with foreign capital, originated after gas production in that area surpassed our early estimates, plus the discovery of new deposits," the official said. Original estimates called for 1,000 to 1,200 cubic feet for each barrel of crude. "However we have found new wells which produce up to 7,000 cubic feet per barrel," he said. Most of this gas is used in petrochemical plants but a great deal of it is simply burned off, Diaz Serrano outlined. "We no longer want to continue burning the gas. Because of this, we have postponed drilling where huge amounts of gas have been found." Until last year, Mexico bought gas from the U.S. But early this year, it sold large quantities to the U.S. because of shortages caused by a harsh winter. Mexico's proven oil reserves surpass 11 billion barrels, but potential resources call for more than 60 bil-

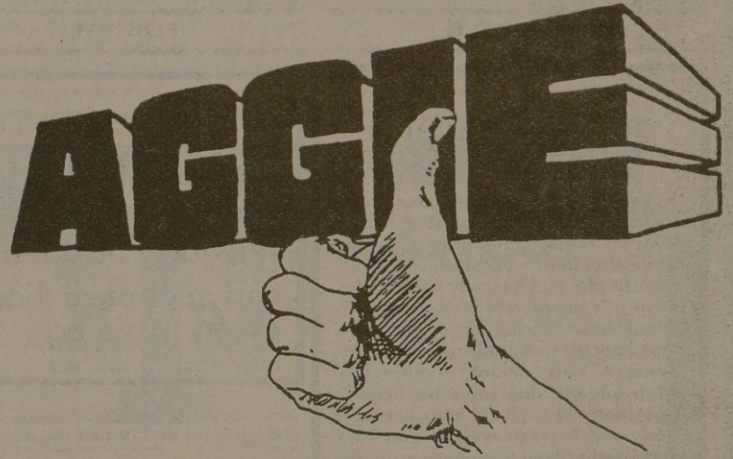
lion barrels, he said. "The issue has not been whether we should have good highways or good schools," he said. "The true issue is whether Texas state government is responsible and farsighted enough to maintain a system of quality public education and a system of quality public transportation, both of which are vital to our standard of living and our future prosperity." Briscoe also noted this was the third consecutive session in which the legislature has not raised state taxes. "I know of no other state in the union which has compiled a record equal to that, and I am going to do my part to keep the record going," he said.

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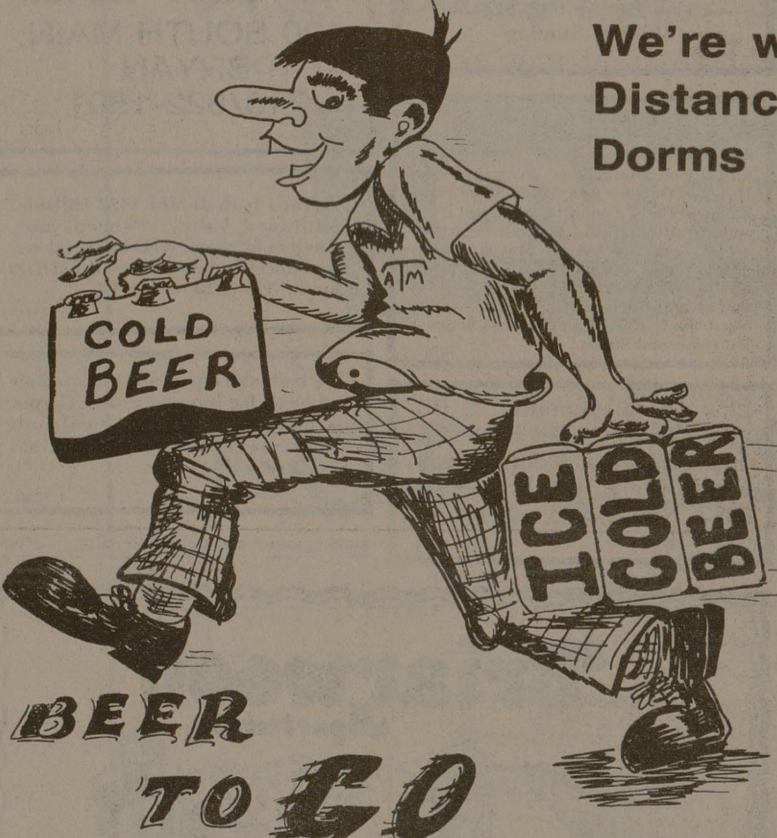
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