

te news

# Legislators voice stiff opposition Briscoe's new tax proposals

United Press International  
AUSTIN — Legislators did not show overwhelming support for Gov. Dolph Briscoe's plan to bring as much as \$1.1 billion in tax relief to Texans, and at least three of the items drew stiff opposition from some lawmakers. Legislators agreed repeal of the general sales tax on residential property, increasing the inheritance tax exemption and increasing the value of residential property from ad valorem taxes by school districts would pass easily. The governor will probably receive assistance in his effort to push through a constitutional amendment requiring two-thirds majority approval of both the Senate and the House to impose new or additional taxes. Gov. Bill Hobby and several other legislators also said they had reservations about another proposed constitutional amendment creating a limit on taxes imposed by local governments and setting a limit on future increases. They have a pretty good system

that has led to very low level of taxation," Hobby said. "We have responsible people in state offices and my basic philosophy is, if it ain't broke, don't fix it."  
Sen. Lloyd Dogget, D-Austin,

## Taxed income lower in Texas, comptroller says

United Press International  
AUSTIN — Texas ranks 46th among the states in the amount of personal income paid in state taxes. State Comptroller Bob Bullock said in 1977, Texans paid 5.82 percent of their personal income in state taxes, compared to a national average of 7 percent. California's state taxes amounted to 7.75 percent of personal income and New York's taxes were 8.04 percent in 1977, Bullock said.

said the two-thirds legislative approval would handcuff the Legislature with a freeze "on the repressive taxation system we have today." He said the amendment also would prevent adoption of refinery taxes or other severance taxes Railroad Commissioner John Poerner, a Briscoe appointee, has recommended. "You don't accomplish property tax reform by freezing the present tax system," said Dogget. Rep. John Bryant said the governor's proposal would be completely cosmetic if Briscoe did not submit a bill Rep. Wayne Peveto, D-Orange, tried to pass during the 1977 Legislature. The Peveto bill, which passed only in the House during the last regular session, would reform the system of appraising and collecting property taxes. The bill would consolidate tax appraisal offices within each county and set uniform statewide guidelines to determine taxes. Briscoe said he had discussed with Speaker Billy Clayton, Hobby and a handful of legislators the possibility of asking the Legislature to consider

the Peveto bill. "I've asked Don Adams (the governor's legal counsel) to review it," said Briscoe. "We need to see the various proposals in the bill and determine if they would help." Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Houston, was among those who said he was unsure of the impact of Briscoe's proposals. "I'd say it's about 50-50," said Leland, who will succeed Rep. Barbara Jordan, D-Texas, in Congress next year. Most legislators, however, were hard pressed to show any enthusiasm for the governor's proposals. Briscoe was welcomed with only moderate applause at the beginning and end of his 10-minute address to a joint session of the Legislature. Rep. Stan Schleuter, D-Salado, was one of the few who gave wholehearted support to Briscoe's package. "I support all of them," Schleuter said. "I think this package pretty well touches everybody that is having trouble with ad valorem taxes. And I think we can afford it."

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# Former son-in-law, woman charged with murder of missing Winnie family

United Press International  
MONT — A refinery and a 30-year-old mother of accused kidnappers and killers of his former in-laws believe feelings related to a divorce charged Monday with murder. The five bodies were found from a common grave on Monday. Joseph Dugas Jr., 32, of Thur, had been arrested Friday charged with kidnapping. May Burnett of Nederland, and as Dugas' girlfriend, was at 2:30 a.m. Monday. At 1 a.m. Monday, deputies unearthing the bodies of Phillips, 64, his wife, Ester, 31, his wife, Ester, 31, his wife, Ester, 31, and their son, Jason, 4,

in a private hunting preserve where Dugas was a member. Dugas and Burnett were accused of kidnapping the five from the elder Phillips' home at Winnie on July 1, binding them, taking them to a wooded area, shooting his in-laws, then burying them in a 5-foot-deep common grave. Jefferson County Sheriff R.E. Culbertson said Dugas, after initially resisting questions, led deputies to the gravesite late Sunday and implicated Burnett. The written complaint against her said she signed a full confession. "He was remorseful," Culbertson said. "I think his conscience finally got to him." Dugas once was married to Phillips' daughter, Mary. A justice of the peace said the family had filed previous disturbance charges against Dugas and that he had undergone treatment at Beaumont Neurological Center in 1975. Chambers County Sheriff Doil

Pounds' original complaint against Dugas said he had told friends of angry feelings against the Phillips and that he planned to kill them. "The man was mad at the old man and the old lady because they sent him off to a mental institution for being off in the head," said Justice of the Peace Jack Cravy. "He said he'd kill them all when he got back." Dugas was jailed Monday at Anahuac, seat of Chambers County, where the kidnappings occurred, in lieu of \$500,000 bond. Murder charges were filed against him at Beaumont, seat of adjacent Jefferson County, where the bodies were found. Cravy, in a hearing at Hamshire near where the bodies were found, set Burnett's bond at \$500,000 Monday during a hearing interrupted by her weeping and fainting, perhaps due to the crush in the grocery store where court was held. Defense lawyer Joe Goodwin pressed for less bond so Burnett

could be with her children. Cravy said he would schedule a hearing later to consider lower bond. Authorities had mounted a massive search for the Phillips after another of their sons, George Phillips, returned to find them gone. The Elmer Phillips lived at Woodward, Okla., and had been visiting his parents at Winnie. There were a few scattered spots of blood in the modest tin-roofed house in a grove of trees on a 10-acre plot. A fan, skillet and coffee maker had been left on. The first major clue to surface was discovered unknowingly July 2 by a couple running an early morning paper route. Elmer Phillips' car was burned in a roadside ditch at the edge of a bayou 10 miles east of the Phillips' home. But because efforts to report the car went awry and searchers were working near the house, it was Thursday before the car was linked to the disappearance.

## Large totes dependence guns protection

United Press International  
DALLAS — A county criminal judge who keeps a .38-caliber derringer within reach hearing misdemeanor cases affirmed he confiscated the guns from his court's evidence. Dallas newspaper has reported Tom Price said he has been taking guns from his court's room for the past two years practicing his shooting skills and using them to arm against persons who have threatened his safety, the Dallas News reported in a recent article. "I want to be able to blow them off if I have to," Price said. "I once in a while I get nervous and they're going something to me and I want to hit them if I have to." Price said the law which requires guns held as evidence in criminal cases to be returned to owners or destroyed by police is no sense. "I said instead of returning the guns he keeps some of them for use. I've taken two or three of them sometimes. I shoot them at a target," he said. "I want to be sure I can hit what I'm shooting at." District Attorney Henry Wade would have to check to determine whether Price's use of the guns was improper or illegal.

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