

the state

Tax reform bill deadlocked in Austin

United Press International
AUSTIN — House leaders Monday called on Gov. Dolph Briscoe and Attorney General John Hill to help break a House-Senate deadlock concerning tax reform and pending limitation provisions of a proposed constitutional amendment on tax relief.

The conference committee met three times Monday without reaching an agreement, then called off the negotiations until Tuesday the final day of the 30-day tax special session convened by Briscoe in the aftermath of California's adoption of Proposition 13.

"I think it is time for the governor to get involved in this conference committee," said Rep. Wayne Peveto, D-Orange. "I think the governor is for property tax relief and I think he is for property tax reform, but so far the Senate has refused to go along with either."

Rep. Tim Von Dohlen, D-Goliad, chairman of the House conferees, said he would telephone Hill, the Democratic nominee for governor, to seek his help in settling the differences between the two Houses before the session adjourns at midnight Tuesday.

There was talk among legislators

Monday that Briscoe would call a news conference Tuesday afternoon in a dramatic attempt to push the tax relief amendment through the Legislature, and perhaps to threaten lawmakers with the prospect of another special session if the proposal is not passed before midnight.

The Senate negotiators, in what they termed their final offer, agreed Monday to a House provision requiring the Legislature to provide formulas to protect school districts from revenue lost through increased property tax exemptions on home-

steads and new tax breaks on agricultural land.

Still in dispute are House proposals to place limits on the growth of state spending, require a majority of the membership rather than simply a majority of those present to pass new tax bills, and a requirement for uniform tax appraisal and county wide assessment of property taxes.

Von Dohlen told reporters that the House might go along with the Senate offer, but said he expects the Senate to compromise on at least part of the three remaining issues before negotiations end.

"They have given in substantially on some crucial things, particularly the reimbursement language," Von Dohlen said. "I think we might sell it to the House, but we're going to get some more before we're through."

Sen. A.M. Aikin Jr., D-Paris, head of the Senate conference committee, gave no indication that the senators were willing to yield any more, however.

"This, I think, is our bottom line," he told Dohlen.

"The Senate has presented its bottom line offer, and that's it," said Sen. Tom Creighton, D-Mineral Wells.

Creighton referred to the Senate proposal as a compromise, but Peveto, who has pushed for adoption of the provision requiring uniform property appraisals, indicated that he thinks senators have not yielded enough.

"There's a difference between compromise and an ultimatum," Peveto said. "I thought everybody was supposed to give a little in a compromise."

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Prison bill fails to pass despite Briscoe's efforts

United Press International
AUSTIN — Critics Monday shot down Gov. Dolph Briscoe's proposal to give the Texas Department of Corrections authority to purchase a new prison site anywhere in the state.

Sen. Lloyd Doggett, D-Austin, tagged the measure in the Senate by demanding 48 hours notice before a committee hearing to consider the proposal when less than 48 hours remained in the special legislative session.

Rep. Jimmy Edwards, D-Conroe, withdrew the proposal from House debate when Rep. Craig Washington, D-Houston, hotly protested speeded-up action there.

"I suppose they are waiting for a prison riot," Sen. William Moore, D-Bryan, grumbled about opponents of the proposal. "The prisons are bursting at the seams."

"I think the project is an unwise

and unnecessary expenditure," Doggett said.

Washington said backers of the bill improperly circumvented him and a full hearing by the House Committee on Social Services in an effort to win quick approval. Backers of the bill, Washington said, got the vice chairman of his committee to convene a meeting without notifying him and approved the bill for debate by the full House.

The committee vice chairman, Rep. Dave Allred, D-Wichita Falls, said he was told Washington was out of town and that there was no controversy on the bill.

"I did not intend to mislead the committee," Edwards said. He said he had been able to locate Washington after the governor's surprise decision to request legislation on the prison site issue.

Briscoe on Friday with only four days remaining in the special ses-

sion asked legislators to pass a bill to repeal statutory restrictions that earlier this year thwarted a move by prison officials to buy land for a new prison in South Texas.

Controversy arose about the project when questions were raised about the legality of the move and news reports revealed the land belonged until recently to a long-time associate of Mafia figures.

Attorney General John Hill ruled that the prison authorities are restricted in purchasing a new prison site by terms of an old statute providing for the state to sell Blue Ridge Prison Farm in Harris County.

The statute specifies proceeds of the prison property near Houston must be used to buy land within 75 miles of Huntsville where the Texas Department of Corrections is headquartered.

Death ends life's debate

Houston girl dies in coma

United Press International
HOUSTON — A 12-year-old comatose girl died in her hospital bed Monday while lawyers debated her fate before a state judge who was asked to terminate the life-support systems keeping her legally alive.

A spokesman at Texas Children's Hospital said Masil "Bunny" Gray died of cardiac arrest.

The announcement came in the hushed courtroom of State District Judge W.H. Miller who for the third time since last month was

hearing legal arguments on the matter.

George Ford, attorney for the Harris County Child Welfare Unit, stood as the delayed afternoon proceeding began and asked the judge to dismiss all motions pending before the court.

"We were advised the child died at 1:15 p.m.," Ford said in a single statement.

Without looking up, the judge responded in the affirmative on Ford's motion.

"The court finds the action moot and it is dismissed," Miller said.

Mrs. Nixon had asked that the county take custody of Bunny July 3 because she had run away from home and her mother feared she was becoming delinquent.

Two weeks later, on July 16, the girl was admitted to the hospital unconscious from smoke inhalation suffered in a fire at the Harris County child welfare facility where she had been staying.

Miller ruled earlier Monday that the county would still be responsible for court and attorneys' fees in the matter. Other costs against the county were still pending.

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