

The Battalion Classified

School tab may hit \$1.2 billion

United Press International
AUSTIN, Texas — Associate Education Commissioner Raymon Bynum says state legislators could be facing a \$1.2 billion bill for additional aid to schools in January and urban schools could be stuck with big tax increases.

To limit to 25 percent the amount local districts are required to raise taxes would cost the state \$600 million, Bynum said Monday.

To alleviate tax increases in urban schools, legislators will need to spend \$400 million and even then school districts such as Houston would face a \$2.2 million increase in the amount of revenue they are expected to raise locally, he said.

"They're going to have to raise a bunch of money or there's going to be a lot of districts that have to raise taxes or cut programs or teachers' salaries," he said.

Bynum said that \$400 million outlay to cover intangibles would be in addition to the cost of any teacher pay raise and the \$400 million legislators already are considering allocating to offset local districts' revenue losses from special tax breaks for homeowners and farmers and ranchers.

Legislators could easily be facing a \$1.2 billion bill for additional aid to schools in January, the education finance expert predicted.

Bynum and the associate director of the School Tax Assessment Practices Board, Kenneth Graeber, reported to the Legislative Commission on School Finance about the impact of a new study for the first time calculating the value of intangible property holdings in the state.

Graeber said 40 percent of the school districts in the state — out of 1,080 — are contesting assessment of their property values set by the study.

Hearings on the appeals will begin Oct. 23 and the board will submit final figures on the wealth local school districts to the Legislature in January, Graeber said.

State aid to local schools is calculated on the basis of each district's wealth — so increases in local rolls mean local districts are expected to pay a larger share of education costs.

Bynum said even if the tax on local school districts are expected to be halved, with the addition of intangibles to school finance formulas, districts such as Houston would face a massive \$8 million increase in the amount they are required to pay toward education costs.

Under current law which stipulates taxes are to be collected on intangibles (a law almost uniformly ignored until recent court suits), state's six largest school districts would lose \$21.6 million in state aid, Bynum said.

Another 46 districts with 100,000 to 49,999 students in average attendance would lose \$33.8 million in state aid, he said.

"Even to those of us who stand this all the time it boggles the mind," Bynum said.

"The two districts in the state that are primarily the hardest hit are Richardson and Midland on a per pupil basis," he said.

Bynum said it will cost the state much more to protect local districts from facing sharp increases in revenue requirements if intangibles must be taxed, than it did to solve the impact of previous moves to ramp up public school finances.

"The losers before were \$30 million to \$40,000 in rural Texas," Bynum said. "The losers now are going to be in the millions (of dollars) in urban Texas."

Sen. Oscar Mauzy, D-Dallas, said he does not believe urban legislators have the votes to insist on the same protection against sharp increases in local spending requirements for city schools that rural lawmakers have won for their areas in previous school finance battles.

"We don't have the numbers and we won't have in the urban areas until redistricting after the 1980 census," Mauzy said. "The Legislature will be the first Legislature in Texas which will be undominated."

Mauzy said he does not believe the school finance debate next year will pit rural areas against urban areas, however.

"The problem is not totally rural-urban," he said. "An awful lot of the rural districts are wealth declining."

Salmon battle set for court

United Press International
WASHINGTON — In the mid-1850s, Isaac I. Stevens took to settle for all time the differences between the white man and the Indian in what is now Washington state.

The latest upshot is that the Supreme Court decided Monday to intervene in a case which — with the exception of some desegregation cases — has been marked by the most concerted official and private efforts to frustrate a decree of a federal court witnessed in this century.

Those quotes are from the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals which last April upheld a decision by federal District Judge George Boldt that Indians living along Puget Sound and its watershed are entitled to half of the salmon taken during the annual spawning run.

Boldt concluded this was required under Indian treaties Isaac Stevens worked out during 1854-55 when he was governor of what then was a territory.

But the Washington state Supreme Court has defied Boldt, concluding his reasoning was all wrong and ordering the state Fisheries Department to ignore his orders.

Fish taken from the area have an estimated commercial value of \$4 million a year, and the state court concluded it is unconstitutional to turn over half the take to Indians who make up less than 1 percent of the population.

The Supreme Court — which has been asked three times in the last 25 years to rule on some phase of the case — will hear arguments this term on the thorny issue, which has stirred scattered incidents of violence, and decide it by written opinion.

State fisheries director Gordon Sandison and other officials welcomed the high court's intervention to settle the matter.

The Circuit Court, trying to bring the problem down, said the state courts and non-Indians who fish for a living "have never fully accepted the principle that treaty rights can be claimed by a politically impotent minority."

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